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MID-REGION COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
REGIONAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION (RPO)

REGIONAL LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

November 20, 2002

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department (NMSHTD) has established a regional transportation planning process which utilizes substate, multi-county districts, each represented by a Regional Planning Organization (RPO). The RPOs are distinct and separate from any federally-designated MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization). The Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) serves as the RPO for transportation planning in the non-metropolitan area of State Planning and Development District 3 (SPDD 3). SPDD 3 consists of Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia Counties; however, the RPO includes a portion of southern Santa Fe County (see Figure 1). This RPO area is located outside and adjacent to the designated Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA). The MRCOG also serves as the MPO for the Albuquerque urbanized area.

The RPO provides a regional forum to consider transportation issues and develop recommendations that achieve an effective transportation system which is both responsive to local needs and priorities, and contributes to the transportation planning process of the State. Also, the RPO provides assistance to local governments (counties, municipalities, tribal governments, and special purpose governments) in the planning and coordination of transportation projects within a regional framework. The RPO planning process benefits the NMSHTD because it identifies and reinforces a program of transportation projects with local participation and regional support.

Content and Purpose of the Regional Transportation Plan

This Regional Long Range Transportation Plan presents a compendium of goals, objectives, and strategies that are intended to facilitate the movement of people and goods throughout the RPO region. Additionally, this Regional Plan contains a listing of Strategic Plan Recommendations for implementation over the next 20 years. These recommendations are aimed at maintaining and improving the existing regional highway network, establishing a comprehensive road network to meet local and regional circulation needs, ensuring the safety of all users, preserving the environment, expanding transportation alternatives, and improving the quality of life of citizens living in the RPO region. The implementation plan contains short, medium, and long range strategic actions within the 20-year timeframe.

Also included in this Long Range Plan is an analysis of regional data and information that characterizes development patterns, population, and transportation systems in the region. Major transportation-related issues are discussed in reference to Federal guidelines for long range transportation plans.

The NMSHTD has requested that all seven RPOs throughout the State complete

Regional Long Range Transportation Plans based on a standardized template for a plan document. Thus, the purpose of this Plan is to establish the Regional Transportation Plan pertaining to this substate region in order to contribute directly as a component of the Long-Range Transportation Plan for New Mexico

Description of the Middle Rio Grande Region

The Middle Rio Grande Region for purposes of RPO transportation planning is comprised of five counties, including Bernalillo, Sandoval, Torrance, Valencia, and southern Santa Fe (Edgewood). The region is bisected by the Rio Grande river valley, which runs from northeastern Sandoval County through the center of both Bernalillo and Valencia Counties. Other prominent water features include the Jemez River (tributary running from northern Sandoval County to the Rio Grande), the Rio Puerco, (tributary to the Rio Grande flowing through the western portion of Sandoval, Bernalillo, and Valencia Counties), and the Salt Lakes in Torrance County, which are located east of Estancia and Willard.

The majority of the population in the Middle Rio Grande Region is located geographically in the Rio Grande valley. The Rio Grande meanders through a rift valley that bisects New Mexico from Las Cruces to Colorado. The rift was formed by the pulling apart of the earth's crust which resulted in a wide valley and is bounded on the east by the Sandia Mountains and the Volcanoes west of Albuquerque. The Manzano Mountains form a mountainous barrier between Valencia and Torrance Counties.

Manzano Mountains, Valencia County

Many Indian Reservations are also scattered throughout the region (see Figure 1). Sandoval County includes many Pueblos, including the Cochiti, Jemez, Laguna, Sandia, San Felipe, Santa Ana, Santa Domingo, and Zia Reservations. A portion of the Jicarilla Apache Reservation is located in northwest Sandoval County. Bernalillo County contains portions of the Isleta, Laguna, and Sandia Pueblo Reservations, and the To'hajillee Chapter of the Navajo Nation. Valencia County contains reservation and trust lands of the Isleta and Laguna Pueblos.

Recent population data show that the Middle Rio Grande region has more than doubled from 359,007 to 729,649 persons over the past 30 years. A similar growth trend is expected to continue over the next 25 years, with the region exceeding one million by 2025.

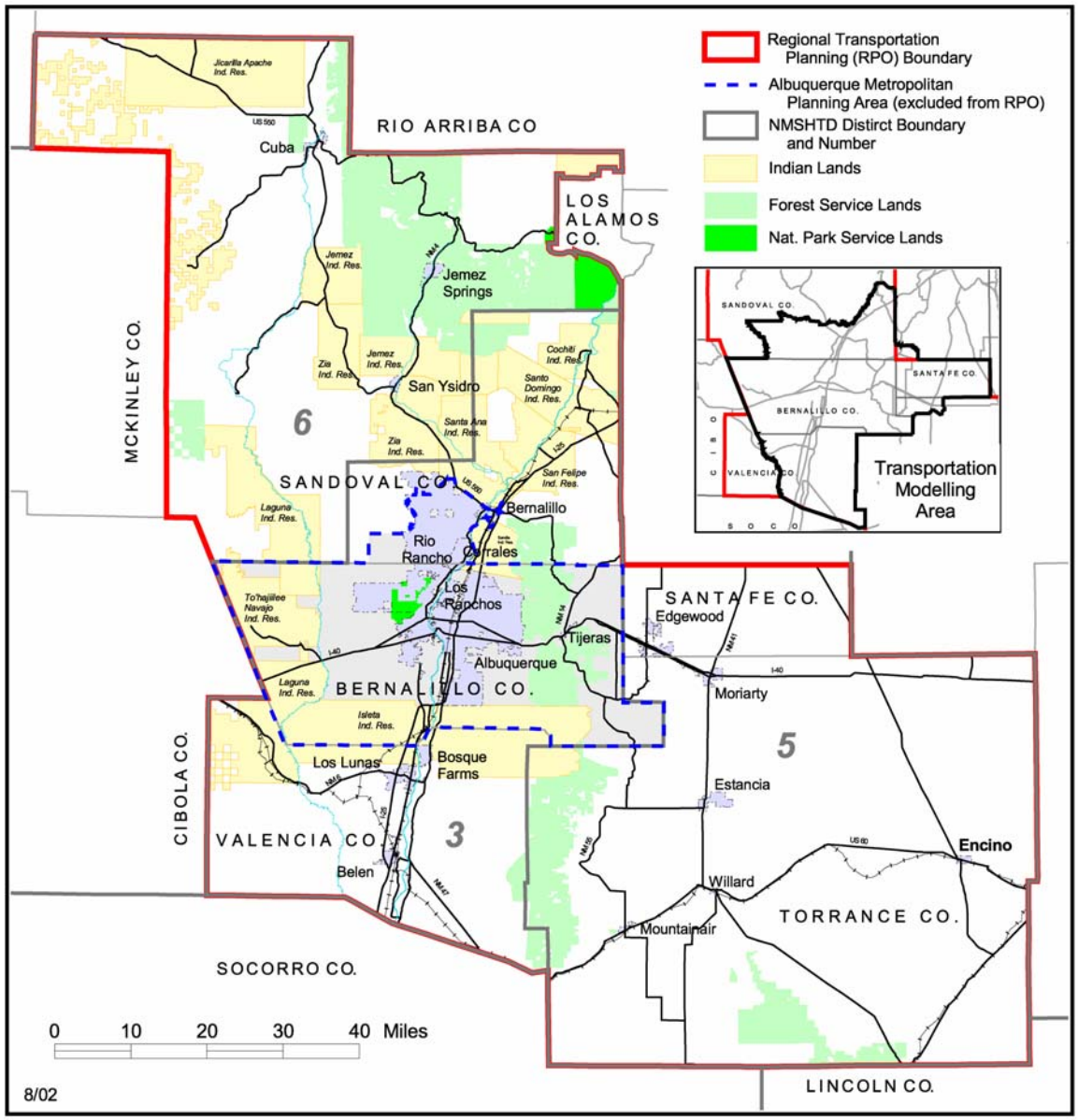

Figure 1
Transportation Planning Boundaries

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The MPO area clearly dominates the region in terms of population. In 2000, Bernalillo County (including the City of Albuquerque) and southern Sandoval County (including the Town of Bernalillo and City of Rio Rancho) accounted for more than 85 percent of the population in the region. Less then 15 percent of the region's population lived in the RPO area.

However, the urbanized area is expanding geographically. Population growth has been increasing in the counties abutting Bernalillo County. In 1960, 88 percent of the region's population was in Bernalillo County. In 2000, Bernalillo County accounted for 76 percent. This is typical of urban out-migration into rural communities due to the affordability and increased availability of housing in these areas. By 2025, it is anticipated that only 66 percent of the region's population will reside in Bernalillo County. Valencia County is forecast to have some of the most significant population growth in the region.

The MPO area also dominates in terms of jobs in the region. Bernalillo County is mostly urban in character, with the City of Albuquerque acting as the financial, educational, cultural, industrial, trade, medical and business focal point for the region, as well as much of the State. In 2000, more than 90 percent of the jobs in the region were located in Bernalillo County and the Rio Rancho area of Sandoval County. Bernalillo County had more jobs than employed residents, which implies that a significant proportion of the District's population works in the MPO area and lives in the RPO area. In Torrance County, there are jobs for less than 50% of the employed residents of the County, while in Valencia County, there are jobs for about 40% of the residents of the County. This is an indication that a significant proportion of these counties' residents are commuting to the MPO region for work. The RPO region is essentially the "commuter shed" for the MPO core city. More information about population and jobs in the region can be found in the MRCOG document P-02-02 which is entitled, 2002 Annual Report for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2000.

PART II

REGIONAL DATA ANALYSIS

The regional transportation system can be understood in many ways. What follows is a description and evaluation of the regional transportation infrastructure and services available to this region. Also, it is necessary to evaluate the mobility consequences of development and land use due to population growth. Demographic and socioeconomic trends and projections of the region are analyzed to anticipate areas within the region where growth may place a burden on the transportation network indicating the need for improvement or capacity expansion. Many of the local communities already have some sense of future needs as well; and a compilation of needs and priorities has been created as a tentative listing for the development and preliminary scoping of future projects, subject to feasibility studies and cost estimates.

Regional Transportation Systems Inventory

Roads and Highways The RPO area covers a large area, and consequently contains many arterial roadways, including Interstate Highways, U.S. Highways, State Roads, and local thoroughfares. The major roads in the region can be seen in Figure 2. The amount of traffic on these roads will intensify as development increases over the next twenty years. There is a definite need to plan for the continued maintenance and improvement of these roads and for a more efficient transportation system.

The functional classification of the major roadways in the RPO is shown in Figure 2. Functional classification is divided into three categories: 1) arterial streets, which consist of continuous or long-distance travel routes providing regional connections among urban and rural communities, and emphasize a high level of mobility through the region; 2) collector streets, which provide a linkage or conduit between local roads and arterial highways; and 3) local streets, which provide direct access to all abutting lands and to conduct traffic to the higher capacity collectors and arterials.

U.S 550, Sandoval County

Functional classification is used to define how specific routes serve the community, both currently and in the future, and also implies design standards necessary to provide adequate traffic-carrying capacity on the street network.

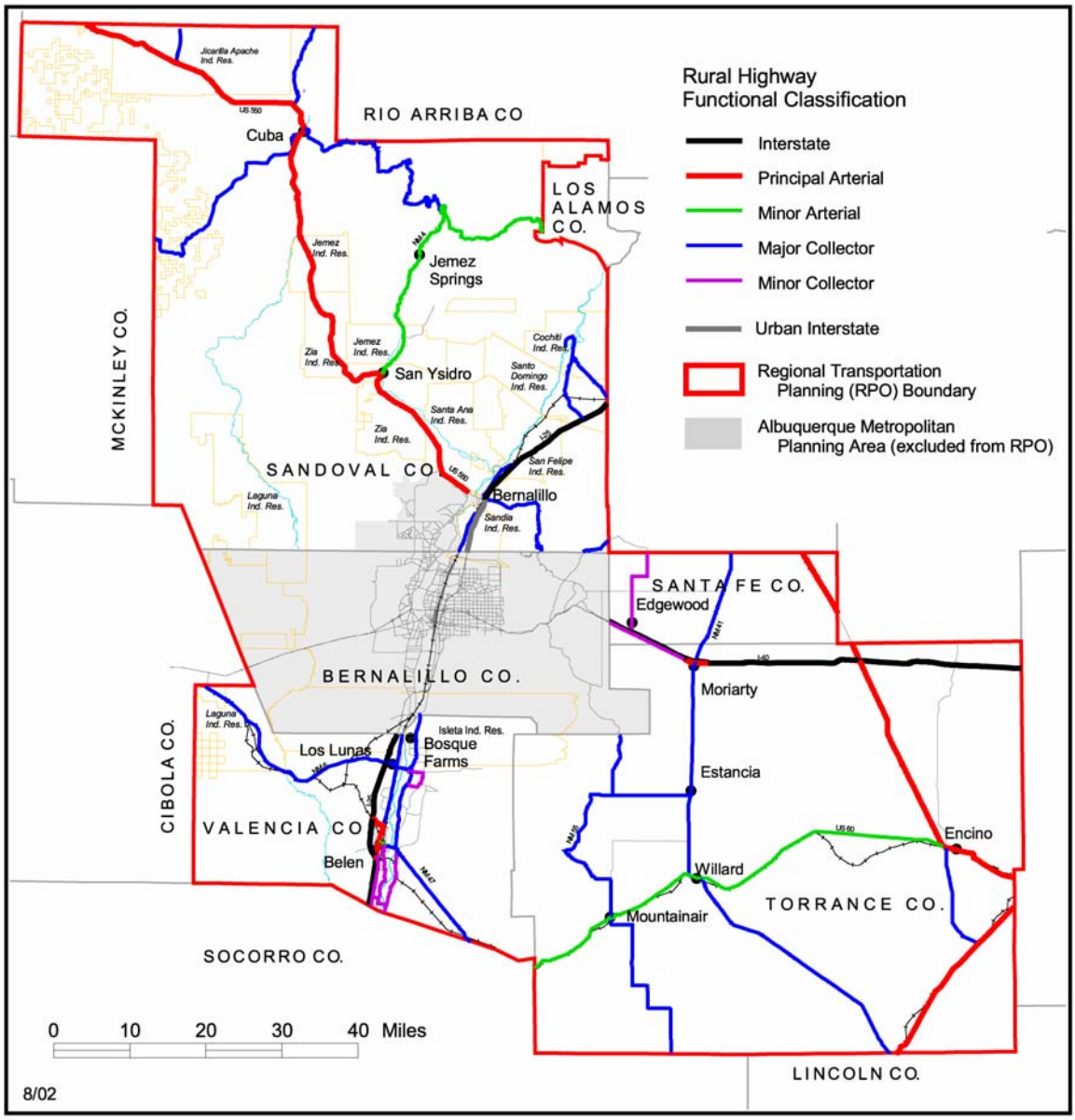

Figure 2
Highway Functional Classification

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Scenic Byways The New Mexico Scenic and Historic Byways Program was established in 1991 by the NMSHTD and funding is provided by the Federal Highway Administration. The purpose of the program is to protect the scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, natural and archeological integrity of the state's highways and adjacent areas. Annual funds are made available for safety improvements, highway improvements to enhance access to areas for recreational purposes, protecting historical and cultural resources in areas adjacent to the highway, developing and providing tourist information, constructing rest areas, turnouts, highway shoulder improvements, passing lanes, overlooks, interpretive facilities, and constructing facilities for the use of pedestrians and bicyclists.

Salt Mission Trail, Torrance County

There are six routes that pass through the RPO area that have been designated as Scenic and Historic Byways. They are as follows: Salt Missions Trail in Bernalillo and Torrance Counties; El Camino Real, which parallels the Rio Grande through Valencia, Bernalillo and Sandoval Counties; Jemez Mountain Trail in Sandoval County; Route 66 Historic Trail, which parallels I-40 and passes through Bernalillo, southern Santa Fe, and Torrance Counties; Abo Pass Trail, which connects the Salt Missions Trail and El Camino Real in Valencia and Torrance Counties; Sandia Crest Scenic Byway in Bernalillo County, and the Turquoise Trail, which passes through Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Santa Fe Counties. Figure 3 displays the Scenic and Historic Byways within this RPO area.

Bridges and Drainage Structures A crucial aspect of transportation systems planning is the coordination of road and highway improvements with drainage facilities. The climate and topography of this region present unique problems because seasonal rainfall often occurs in brief but intense thunderstorms that can result in flooding and ponding. Storm water runoff from upland areas, irrigation water conveyance canals, drainage pathways such as arroyos and washes, and the streets themselves can cause flooding problems. Planning for drainage facilities is generally conducted by the local governments, special districts, and/or regional authorities. These activities are carried out as part of local capital improvement programs.

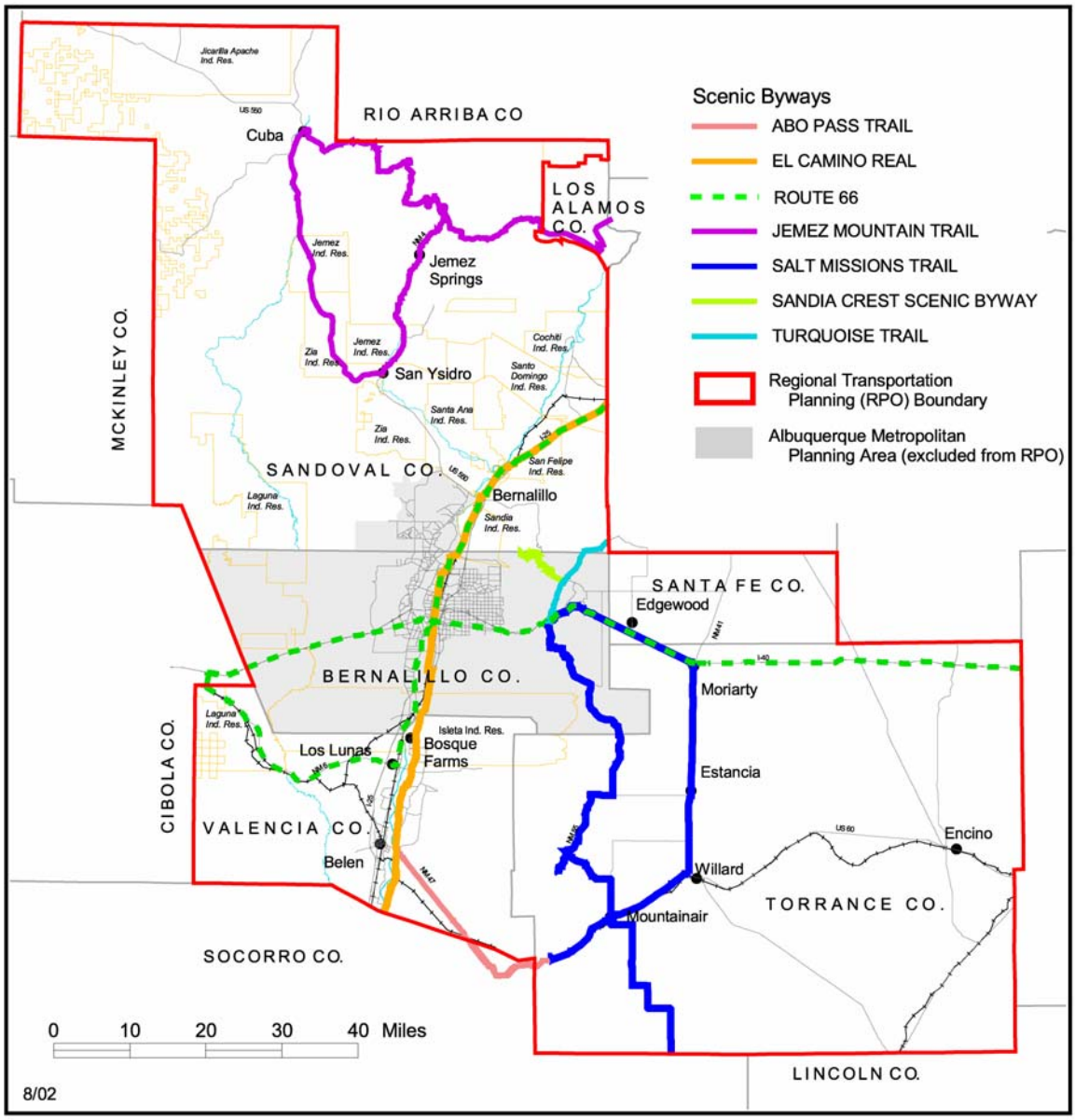

Figure 3
Scenic Byways

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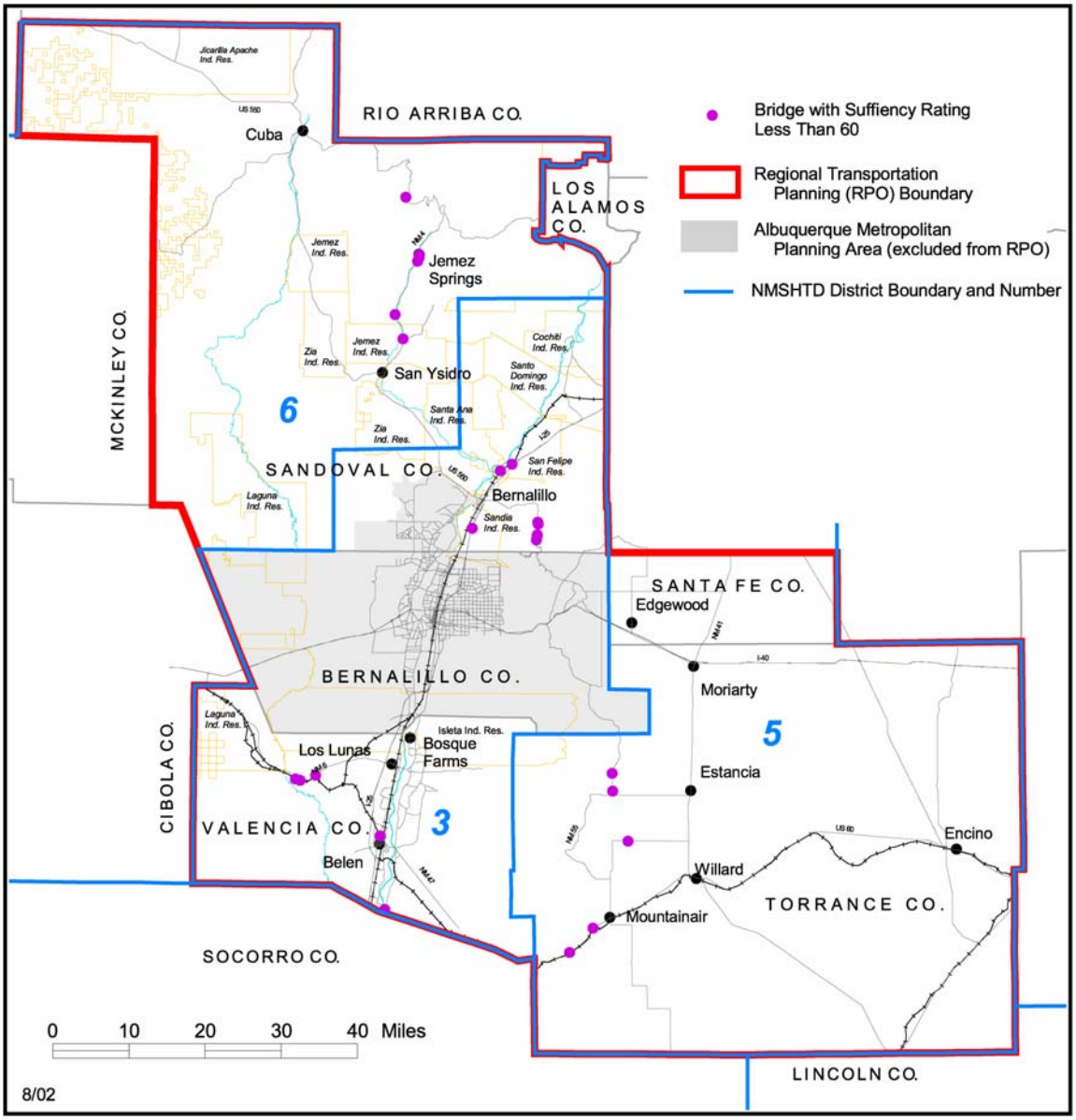
The Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) was established in 1927 to control devastating floods, drain waterlogged lands, and provide irrigation to croplands. The MRGCD maintains networks of canals, ditches, bridges, culverts, and water diversion structures that unavoidably overlap with the street network. As the region experiences growth, management of stormwater runoff will become more difficult and complex, and a greater number of bridges, storm water pipes, conveyance canals, and water detention structures will become necessary.

NMSHTD maintains a bridge inventory and sufficiency rating system which is used to determine the priorities for replacing and rehabilitating bridges. NMSHTD's sufficiency rating system follows the Federal Highway Administration's sufficiency rating formula published in Recording and Coding Guide for the Structure Inventory and Appraisal of the Nation's Bridges. The sufficiency rating formula is a method of evaluating highway bridge data by calculating four separate factors (1. structural adequacy and safety, 2. serviceability and functional obsolescence, 3. essentiality for public use, 4. special reductions) to obtain a numeric value which is indicative of bridge sufficiency to remain in service. The result of this technique is a percentage in which 100 percent would represent an entirely sufficient bridge and zero percent would represent an entirely insufficient or deficient bridge.

Bridge along U.S. 60, Torrance County

A list of bridges throughout the RPO region with sufficiency ratings of less than 60 is listed in Figure 4. Bridges with a sufficiency rating of less than 60 are considered to be in need of repair, however, a low sufficiency rating does not automatically ensure bridge repair. Funding must be obtained before bridge restoration can occur. The bridges identified in Figure 4 only include those found on state-maintained highways. Bridges on local roads were not included. The bridges with a sufficiency rating of less than 60 are listed in Table 1.



Source: NMSHTD, 6/2002.

Figure 4
Lowest Scoring Bridges for Sufficiency Rating
on State Maintained Highways

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Table 1

RPO Bridges with Sufficiency Ratings Less Than 60

Bridge No.	Sufficiency Rating	Route No.	Location	Highway District	County
5919	2.0	IRR/I-25 SBL	12 mi n of jct I-25/I-40	3	Sandoval
5917	2.0	IRR/NM-313	6.4 mi n of jct NM-44	3	Sandoval
5916	2.0	NM-126	29.2 mi e of jct NM-550	6	Sandoval
5155	4.0	NM-165	11.5 mi e of jct I-25	3	Sandoval
5156	4.0	NM-4	17.8 mi n of jct NM-44	6	Sandoval
8053	4.0	NM-4	18.1 mi n of jct NM-44	6	Sandoval
8390	5.0	NM-165	11.8 mi e of jct I-25	3	Sandoval
2158	16.3	NM-337	.54 mi n of NM-55	5	Torrance
6056	16.4	IRR-NM-4	6.1 mi n of jct NM-4 & NM-44	6	Sandoval
441	25.7	NM-485	.05 mi w of jct NM-4	6	Sandoval
212	34.5	NM-304	8.4 mi s of jct NM-47	3	Valencia
5460	36.0	NM-4	18.8 mi n of jct NM-44	6	Sandoval
8065	36.8	NM-165	9.7 mi e of jct I-25	3	Sandoval
3937	43.5	NM-165	9.9 mi e of jct I-25	3	Sandoval
7628	47.1	NM-165	9.7 mi e of jct I-25	3	Sandoval
213	49.1	Loop-13	0.9 mi n of NM-309/Belen	3	Valencia
214	49.1	NM-6	9.8 mi w of I-25	3	Valencia
7114	50.8	NM-6	22.1 mi se of jct I-40/NM-6	3	Valencia
5234	51.1	NM-6	20.8 mi se of Jct I-40	3	Valencia
6100	52.9	US-60	7.7 mi w of jct NM-55	5	Torrance
5824	53.7	NM-337	2.8 mi n of NM-55	5	Torrance
5825	53.7	US-60	2.8 mi w of jct NM-55	5	Torrance
5912	58.4	IRR/NM-313	4.7 mi n of jct NM-44	3	Sandoval
5735	59.3	NM-542	7.2 mi n of jct NM-55	5	Torrance

The bridges that are in most desperate need of repair are located in Sandoval County. Not only are there more bridges in Sandoval County with sufficiency ratings less than 60, but they also have the lowest sufficiency ratings in the region. There are several bridges in Sandoval County along N.M. 4, N.M. 165, and N.M. 313 that are in serious need of repair. In Torrance County there are bridges in need of repair along both U.S. 60 and N.M. 337. Valencia County has bridges in need of restoration are along N.M. 6 and N.M. 304. The counties and municipalities need to work together with NMSHTD and identify these bridges as priorities for urgent repair. A recent survey among those in the RPO region identified road maintenance and repair as both the top priority and the chief safety concern in the RPO area.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities Bicycling and walking play important roles as alternative forms of transportation. There are many potential Federal-aid funding sources for bikeway and pedestrian facilities. These include National Highway System

funds, Surface Transportation Program funds, Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Program funds, Federal Lands Highway funds, Scenic Byways Program funds, and National Recreation Trails funds.

There are three different types of bikeway facilities:

Route: The bicycle shares the lane of traffic with the car. There is no separation between the car and the bicycle. The bicyclist has the same right to use the street as the motorist, but the bicyclist must obey the same traffic laws and signals.

Lane: The lane offers the benefit to the bicyclist of having an exclusive area only to be used by the bicyclist. Cars may not drive in a bicycle lane. However, cars may park in a bicycle lane or enter the lane to make a turn.

Trail: Trails are used more for recreation than commuting. Trails are frequently shared with pedestrians. They provide the safest off-road area for bicyclists.

The NMSHTD has prepared the New Mexico Bicycle-Pedestrian-Equestrian Transportation Plan, which is intended to supply general guidelines for bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian pathway planning, design, and construction. The purpose of the plan is to develop engineering design standards for the safe coexistence of motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians; promote alternative forms of transportation; and to develop safety, educational, and enforcement programs.

Rio del Oro Bicycle Trail, Valencia County

There are many state highways in the RPO planning area that are commonly used by bicyclists. Valencia County is in the process of designing and building three separate bicycle-pedestrian trails that will eventually interconnect with one another. These projects are being built with Transportation Program Enhancement (TPE) funds. The Rio del Oro Trail will link much of the east mesa together by connecting the UNM Valencia campus, Tome Elementary School, and Manzano Vistas. When completed, the Rio del Oro Trail will be approximately 10 miles long. The Rio Communities Core Link will link to the Rio del Oro Trail at the intersection of Manzano Expressway and Rio del Oro, south. The trail will travel south on the Manzano Expressway to N.M. 47 and the old core area of Rio Communities. The Rio Communities Core Link will be approximately 6 miles long when completed. The Greenways Trail will intersect with the Rio del Oro Trail, and will be approximately 15 miles long when completed (see Figure 5). These three bicycle-pedestrian trails will provide alternative forms of transportation,

increase safety for bicyclists and pedestrians, and improve recreation in Valencia County.

The City of Belen and the Village of Bosque Farms are also using TPE funds to construct bicycle/pedestrian trails. Phase I of the Delgado Street Trail in Belen will run parallel to the Belen High Canal from the Belen Multi-purpose Recreational Park to the Belen High School entrance, and will connect to the existing 1-mile jogging/walking trail in the Park . The trail will then continue east along Delgado Street to Mesa Road. Phase II will continue east along Delgado Street, beginning at Mesa Road and ending at Tenth Street. Other phases may eventually connect to Main Street, the west side, and other parts of the City. The Bosque Loop Trail in Bosque Farms will be approximately 3.1 miles long, and will connect the business district, elementary school, Village offices, library, parks, recreation complexes, and neighborhoods. The Bosque Loop Trail will follow the north, west, and south segments of the Bosque Loop (see Figure 5). A recent survey in the RPO region indicates that Valencia County has a high level of support for bicycle routes and pedestrian trails.

Public Transportation Public transportation funding programs throughout the State and in the regional planning area are administered by the Public Transportation Programs Bureau of the NMSHTD. A list of recommended projects is reviewed and evaluated by all of the RPO's. There are several different Public Transportation Federal Programs available. The Section 5309 program provides funding for the establishment of new rail or busway projects (New Starts), the improvement and maintenance of existing rail and other fixed guideway systems that are more than seven years old, and the upgrading of bus systems. At least 5.5% of the Section 5309 bus funds must be used in non-urbanized areas. The Section 5310 program makes funds available to meet the special transportation needs of elderly and disabled persons. Section 5310 funds are apportioned to the states annually by a formula that is based on the number of elderly and disabled persons in each state. The Section 5311 program provides funding for public transportation in nonurbanized (rural) areas. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds are apportioned to nonurbanized areas of the states based on a statutory formula of each state's population in rural and small urban areas (under 50,000 population). The Section 3037 program provides funding for Job Access and Reverse Commute. Job Access grants are designed to provide new transit services to assist welfare recipients and other low-income individuals in getting to jobs, training, and child care. Reverse Commute grants are intended to develop transit services to transport employees to suburban job sites.

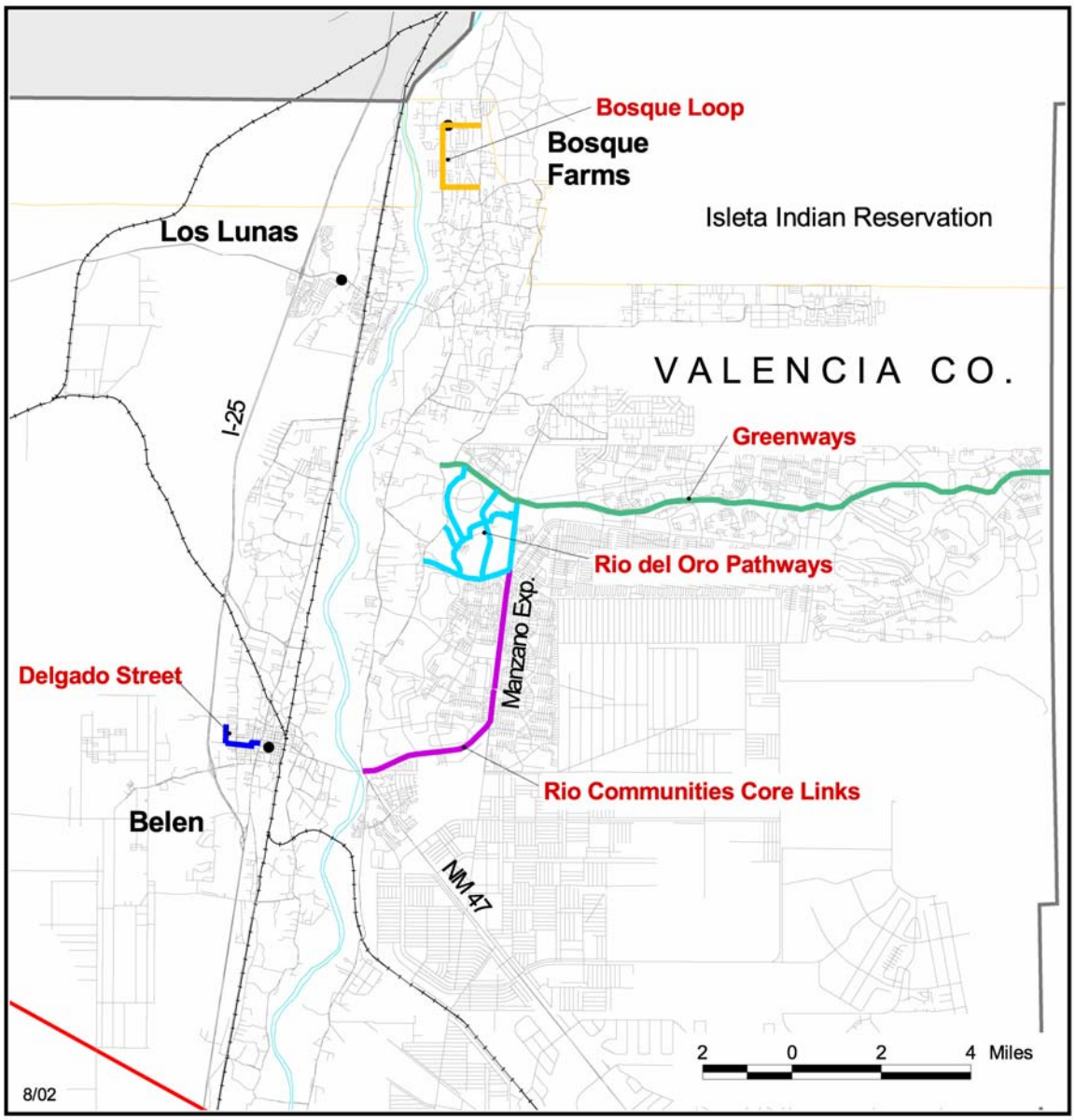

Figure 5
Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths

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The Village of Los Lunas receives funding from the Section 5311 program to operate three 15 passenger vans, two of which are lift equipped for elderly and handicapped passengers. These vans provide a demand response service throughout Valencia County, and require advance notice of 24 hours. Los Lunas also receives Section 3037 funding, a program that operates four vans countywide for employment, counseling, medical, and day care services. This service also transports Valencia County residents to Bernalillo County. Valencia County is receiving Section 5309 capital funding, which will be used to build a multi-modal facility in Los Lunas for buses, vans, rail and transportation offices.

Public Transportation Vans, Los Lunas

The City of Belen receives Section 5311 funding for the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP) to operate a 9-passenger lift-equipped van. RSVP provides demand response service to the general public in Belen and Rio Communities. Advance notice of 24 hours is required. Although service is usually limited to Belen and Rio Communities, passengers can also be transported to Albuquerque for special events.

Valencia Counseling Services receives funding for a 16 passenger handicapped accessible van for the mentally ill in Valencia County. There is no cost charged to those that qualify for this demand response system that travels between Los Lunas and Belen.

GO FORS, INC./City of Moriarty and Torrance County receive Section 3037 funding for three vans (two fifteen passenger vans and one twelve passenger van) to provide demand response service to Moriarty, Estancia, Mountainair, and Edgewood. The majority of the riders are transported to the job training center in Moriarty, but the service will transport to other locations, including Albuquerque. There is no charge for those receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, while others (including the general public) pay a reduced fee.

Sandoval County provides transportation to women and children through the Maternal Child Health Grant. A seven-passenger van serves the communities of Bernalillo, Santa Ana, Santa Domingo, San Felipe, and Peña Blanca. Passengers are transported to medical appointments in Albuquerque free of charge.

Adelante is a non-profit corporation providing non-medical transportation services to people with sever disabilities attending programs for vocational, community living, and training and support in Bernalillo, Sandoval, and Valencia Counties.

Scheduled intercity bus service is provided by TNM&O. Scheduled service in the RPO area is available in the following cities: Belen, Cuba, Encino, Estancia, and Moriarty. TNM&O travels throughout the U.S. southwest, serving many cities in New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Kansas, providing connections to Greyhound and many other carriers (see Figure 6).

Rail Railroads are historically an important mode of transportation throughout New Mexico and in this regional planning area where both rail passenger and freight service are provided. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad traverses the regional planning area from north to south and east to west, while the Southern Pacific Railroad crosses the southeast corner of Torrance County (see Figure 6).

Amtrak currently provides daily passenger service between Chicago and Los Angeles. Amtrak proposals for future passenger rail service have included a Denver-Albuquerque-Las Cruces-El Paso train, a Dallas-Fort Worth-Lubbock-Clovis-Vaughn-Mountainair-Belen-Albuquerque train, and a train providing service from Albuquerque to Phoenix or Tucson.

With the exception of Amtrak's national service that passes through and stops in Albuquerque, there is currently no passenger rail service within the regional planning area. However, there have been local studies of commuter rail service connecting Albuquerque and Santa Fe, and Belen and Bernalillo. The Belen-Bernalillo commuter rail study was recently (2001) examined by the Middle Rio Grande Connections project (a mutual effort of NMSHTD, City of Albuquerque Transit Department, and MRCOG). The existing railroad track between Belen and Bernalillo consists of Class 3 and Class 4 welded rail, which is extensively signalized to modern standards, and could allow operating speeds of up to 79 m.p.h. The existing track and bi-directional signalization is in excellent condition, Amtrak trains presently operate on this track between Bernalillo and Albuquerque, and freight trains currently operate throughout the day between Belen and Bernalillo. In addition to the railroad alignment being relatively flat, the BNSF alignment does not deviate from the most direct route possible, connects the communities of Belen, Los Lunas, Bernalillo, and Isleta and Sandia Pueblos directly to downtown Albuquerque, and allows a number of parcels along the corridor to be potentially developed as rail stations (see Figure 6).

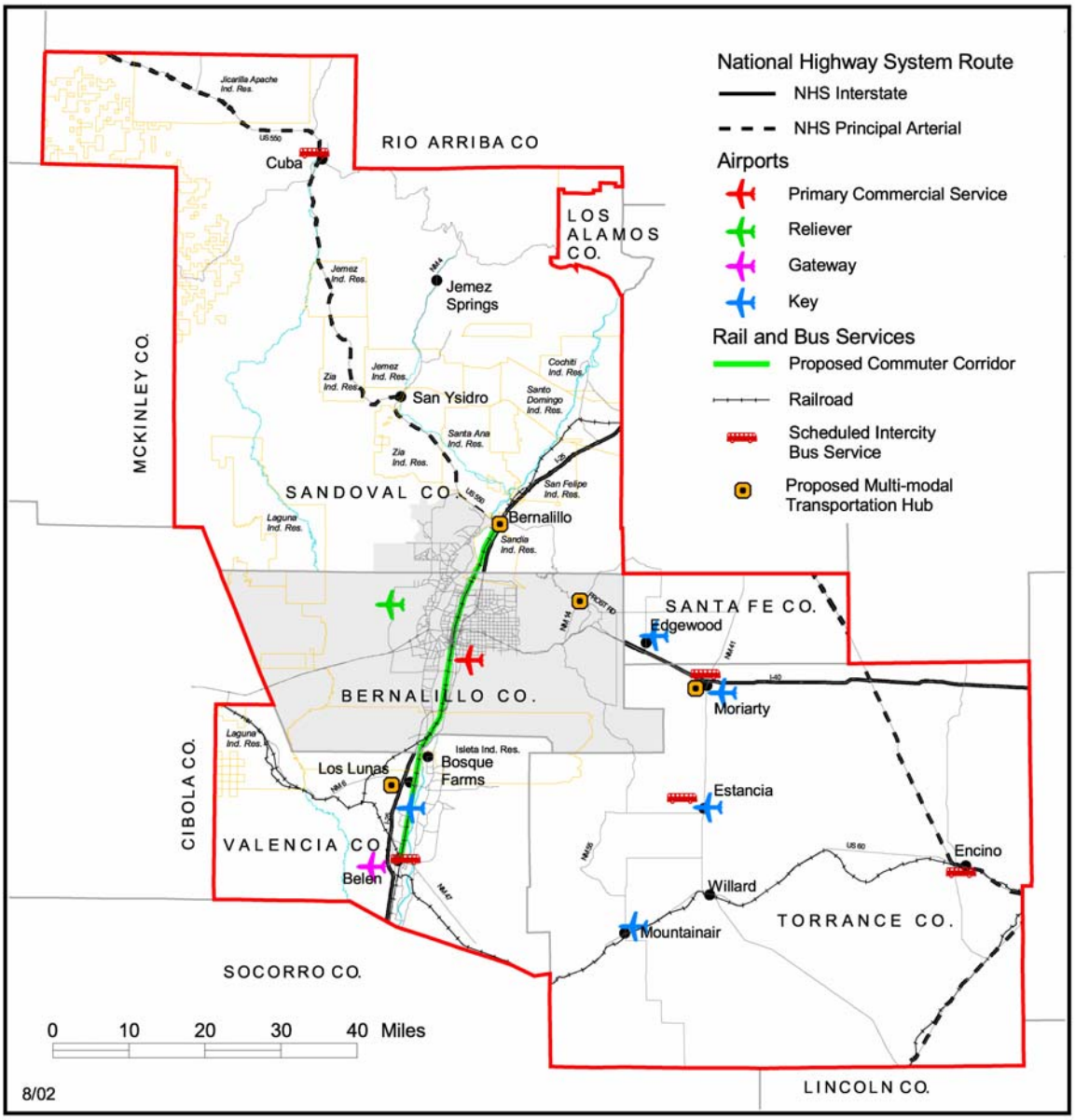

Figure 6
Transportation Facilities and
Proposed Commuter Corridor

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While none of these studies has resulted in a passenger commuter rail system, the increase in population, employment, and traffic congestion in the Middle Rio Grande Region over the next twenty-five years may warrant a commuter rail or other high-capacity transportation system. The population in the RPO region is projected to more than double from 116,044 in 2000 to 238,432 by 2025. Employment is also projected to more than double throughout the RPO from 24,655 to 63,940.

Belen Railyard

The majority of rail traffic throughout the regional planning area is used to haul goods, rather than people. The greater part of freight traffic consists of general merchandise, grain and food products, chemicals, motor vehicles, and minerals. Intermodal traffic (trailers on flat cars and container boxes) is also increasing steadily.

Aviation As a result of low population densities and large distances between communities throughout New Mexico, aviation is a vital link in the state's transportation system. Industries such as manufacturing, construction, trade, real estate, and tourism, rely to some extent on efficient and dependable air transportation.

The airports in the Middle Rio Grande RPO region are classified as either Gateway or Key airports. Gateway airports provide business access for general aviation and should attract business to a community. Key airports provide access to areas that do not have sufficient activity to justify a gateway facility. Gateway and Key airports are general aviation, basic utility airports designed to accommodate small aircraft (most single and many twin-engine aircraft). The following are the system airports which are located within the regional planning area (see Table 2 and Figure 6).

Alexander Municipal Airport, Belen

Table 2

Airports in the RPO Area

AIRPORT	LOCATION	COUNTY	CLASSIFICATION
Alexander Municipal Airport	Belen	Valencia	Gateway
Estancia Municipal Airport	Estancia	Torrance	Key
Mid Valley Airpark (Private)	Los Lunas	Valencia	Key
Moriarty Municipal Airport	Moriarty	Torrance	Key
Mountainair Municipal Airport	Mountainair	Torrance	Key
Sandia Airpark (Private)	Edgewood	Santa Fe	Key

These gateway and key airports in the RPO area are reliever airports for Albuquerque International Sunport and Double Eagle II Airport in Bernalillo County. The New Mexico Aviation Division Five-Year Capital Improvement Program 2000-2004 identifies the capital improvements and maintenance projects needed at each airport in New Mexico. Capital improvements to five of the airports in the RPO area are listed below.

Alexander Municipal Airport, Belen: Construct crosswind runway and parallel taxiway with Medium Intensity Runway Lighting (MIRL). Widen parallel taxiway from 30' to 40'. Acquire additional land. Install lighted runway/taxiway signs and retroreflective markers. Install visual approach aids. Preserve and maintain existing pavement. Improve hangar area, install security (chain link fencing), supplemental windcones (in progress). Construct snow removal equipment building, acquire snow removal equipment.

Estancia Municipal Airport, Estancia: Rehab existing dirt airport operating surfaces. Construct airplane parking area with tiedowns and concrete helipad. Construct gate with combination lock and install reflective markings.

Mid Valley Airpark, Los Lunas: Airport association is exploring options to become a public entity to enable State to allocate funds to airport. Preserve and maintain existing pavement.

Moriarty Municipal Airport, Moriarty: Acquire additional land. Expand hangar area. Acquire snow removal equipment, pavement sweeper and construct storage building. Construct crosswind runway and sail plan apron. Preserve and maintain existing pavement. Construct access road, fencing, aircraft parking apron and auto parking area. Upgrade water system.

Mountainair Municipal Airport, Mountainair: Apply fly ash stabilizing treatment to existing runway and install reflective cones. Preserve and maintain existing facility.

Multi-modal Facilities The RPO area does not have any multi-modal facilities operating at this time. However, Valencia County is currently receiving capital funding from Section 5309, which will be used to build a multi-modal facility in Los Lunas containing facilities for buses, vans, rail, visitor's center, and transportation offices (see Figure 6).

Also, a de facto park and ride lot used by hundreds of daily commuters is located in the Town of Bernalillo at the intersection of U.S. 550 and South Hill Road, just off the I-25 interchange. This park and ride lot is not paved, but funds have been earmarked recently for improvements to be made, and the lot could evolve into a multi-modal facility to serve Sandoval and Bernalillo counties. The park and ride lot is in a premier location, located at the intersection of I-25 and U.S. 550, and very close to the BNSF railroad. A future multi-modal facility at this location could contain facilities for a permanent park and ride lot with accommodations for carpooling, vanpooling, bus, rail, and a visitors' center with public and private transportation information.

Projected Growth and Land Use Trends

Population Distribution The population in the RPO is both scattered and clustered throughout the region. The majority of the population in the RPO resides within medium-sized municipalities. Table 3 (on the following page) displays the 2000 population of Counties, municipalities, and Census Designated Places (CDP) in the RPO region.

Population and Employment Forecasts (2025) Based on population growth trends in the RPO region, the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) developed population and employment forecasts for 2025. The data presented here are disaggregated into Data Analysis Subzones (DASZ). DASZ maps can be found in Appendix A. DASZ's are a MRCOG configuration of geographical areas identified for statistical purposes.

The population forecast was developed with data from the 2000 US Census Bureau, the MRCOG, and the University of New Mexico Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER). The employment forecast was developed with data from the New Mexico Department of Labor, the Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) model, BBER, and MRCOG. The population and employment forecasts (found in Appendix A) are based on a preliminary iteration of the new MRCOG 2025 forecast. The new 2025 forecast based on the available 2000 Census data is currently being developed and refined by MRCOG. The final forecast may present adjusted data.

Table 3
Population Distribution in the RPO

County	Municipality or CDP	2000 Pop		County	Municipality or CDP	2000 Pop
Sandoval		89908		**Torrance**		16911
	Algodones	688			Encino	94
	Cochiti	507			Estancia	1584
	Cuba	590			Manzano	54
	Jemez Pueblo	1953			Moriarty	1765
	Jemez Springs	375			Mountainair	1116
	La Jara	209			Tajique	148
	Pena Blanca	661			Torreon	244
	Placitas	3452			Willard	240
	Ponderosa	310				
	Pueblo of Sandia Village	344		**Valencia**		66152
	Regina	99			Belen	6901
	San Felipe Pueblo	2080			Bosque Farms	3931
	Santa Ana Pueblo	479			Casa Colorada	56
	Santa Domingo Pueblo	2550			El Cerro-Monterey Park	5483
	San Ysidro	238			Jarales	1434
	Torreon	297			Los Chaves	5033
	Zia Pueblo	646			Los Lunas	10034
					Los Trujillos-Gabaldon	2166
Santa Fe					Meadow Lake	4491
	Cedar Grove	599			Peralta	3750
	Edgewood	1893			Rio Communities	4213
					Rio Communities North	1588
					Tome-Adelino	2211
					Valencia	4500

Population growth for the RPO area is forecast for Sandoval, Valencia, Santa Fe, and Torrance counties. Valencia County is forecast to have some of the most significant population growth. The majority of the population growth in Valencia County is projected to take place in the following communities: Belen, Los Lunas, Rio Communities, Las Maravillas, El Cerro Mission, Valencia, the UNM Valencia Campus area, Meadow Lake, Los Chavez and Bosque Farms. In Sandoval County, the bulk of the RPO population increase is anticipated to occur in the Placitas area, the master planned areas located north of Rio Rancho and south of the Zia Indian Reservation, and in the master planned communities of La Madera and Paa-Ko in the far southeast corner of Sandoval County. Significant growth in Sandoval County is also forecast for Algodones, Jemez Springs, Cuba, and the Cochiti Indian Reservation. In Torrance County, the majority of the growth is projected to occur in and around Moriarty. In southern Santa Fe County, significant population growth is forecast to take place in and around Edgewood. The forecast population growth can be seen in the map in Figure 7

and in Appendix A, which list population change from 2000 to 2025 by DASZ's.

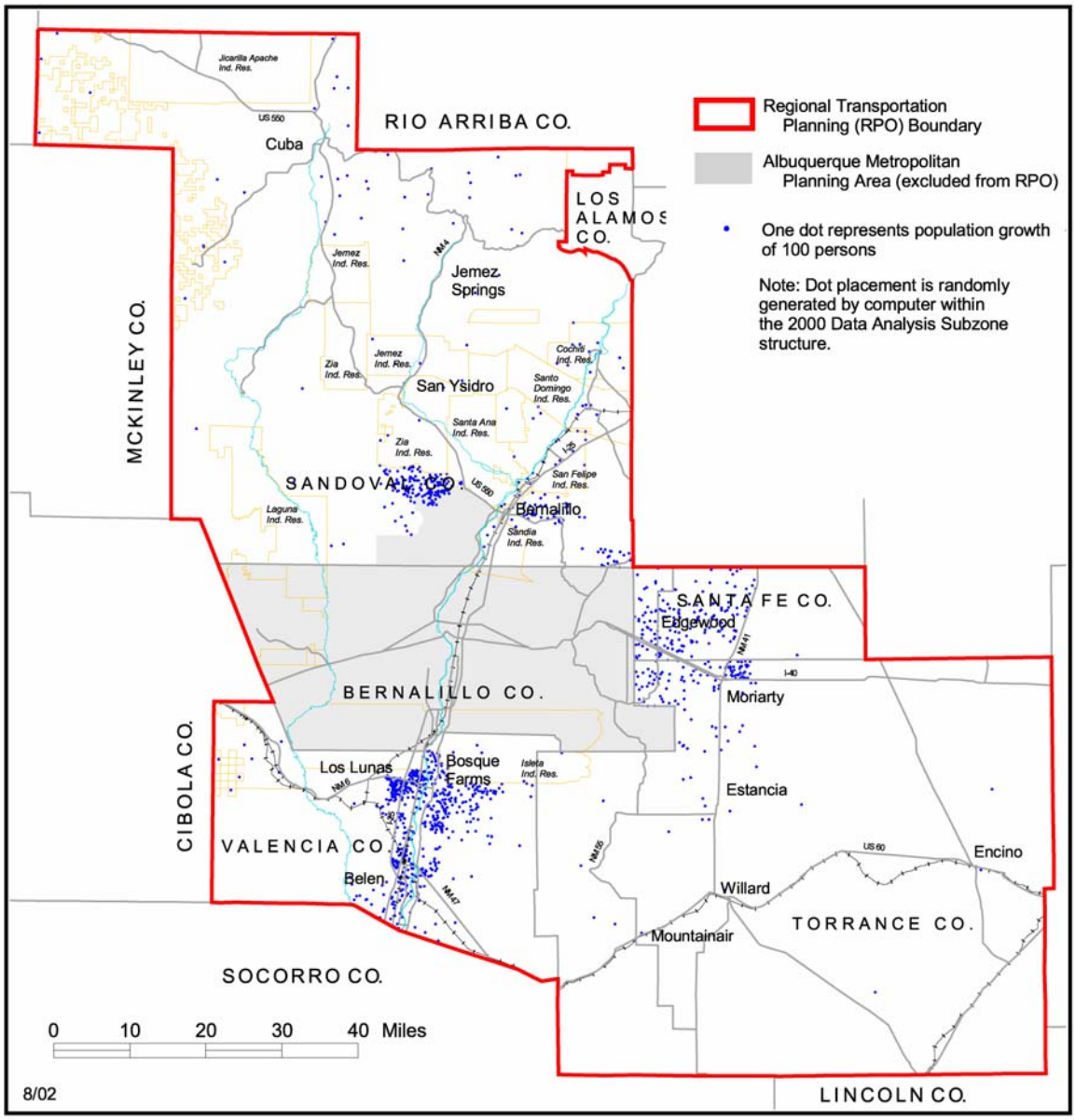
Employment growth is also projected in each of the four counties in the RPO region: Sandoval, Valencia, Santa Fe, and Torrance. One of the major areas of employment growth in Valencia County is forecast to take place in Los Lunas. Also, several of the communities east of the Rio Grande in Valencia County are anticipated to increase in local employment. These communities include Rio Communities, the UNM-Valencia campus area, El Cerro Mission, and Meadow Lake. In Sandoval County one of the major areas of employment growth is forecast to occur in the developing areas north of Rio Rancho and Bernalillo. Employment growth is also anticipated east of Bernalillo. Considerable employment growth is projected in Santa Fe County particularly around Edgewood, and in Torrance County in the Moriarty and Estancia areas (refer to Figure 8 and Appendix A).

Future population and employment growth in the RPO region could place more demands on the existing highway system. However, while significant employment growth is forecast for specific areas in the RPO region, Albuquerque and Bernalillo County will remain the major attraction for jobs in the region. The population growth clusters within the Albuquerque "commuter shed" (including Los Lunas, Bosque Farms, Rio Communities, Placitas, Bernalillo, Edgewood, and Moriarty) will put even greater pressure on the major roads that connect to Albuquerque, such as I-25, NM 47, I-40, and US 550. Traffic flow maps for Sandoval, Valencia, Torrance and southern Santa Fe County identify current traffic volumes throughout the RPO region (see Appendix B).

General Regional Economic Trends The regional economy, which has traditionally been dependent on the government sector, is becoming more diverse. As the Albuquerque metropolitan area continues to urbanize, farming has become a relatively small share of the regional economy, with farm employment now accounting for less than one percent of the region's total employment. However, farming remains an important source of jobs for Torrance County, accounting for almost 12% of the jobs in that county.

Services and trade (retail and wholesale) are the dominant sectors in the region, providing 57.9% of the jobs in Bernalillo County, 44.9% of the jobs in Sandoval County, 49.5% of the jobs in Torrance County, and 44.5% of the jobs in Valencia County. Retail trade is especially important in New Mexico, because local governments rely heavily on gross receipts taxes to fund services.

The state and local government sector remains an important sector in the RPO region, accounting for 22.6% of the employment in Torrance County and 22.4% of the employment in Valencia County. Much of this employment can be attributed to the numerous school districts, in addition to county and municipal governments.



The data displayed on this map is based on an early iteration of the new MRCOG 2025 forecast. A new 2025 forecast based on the available 2000 Census data is currently being developed by MRCOG. The final forecast may present a different view.

Figure 7
Draft Population Growth 2000-2025
by 2000 Data Analysis Subzone

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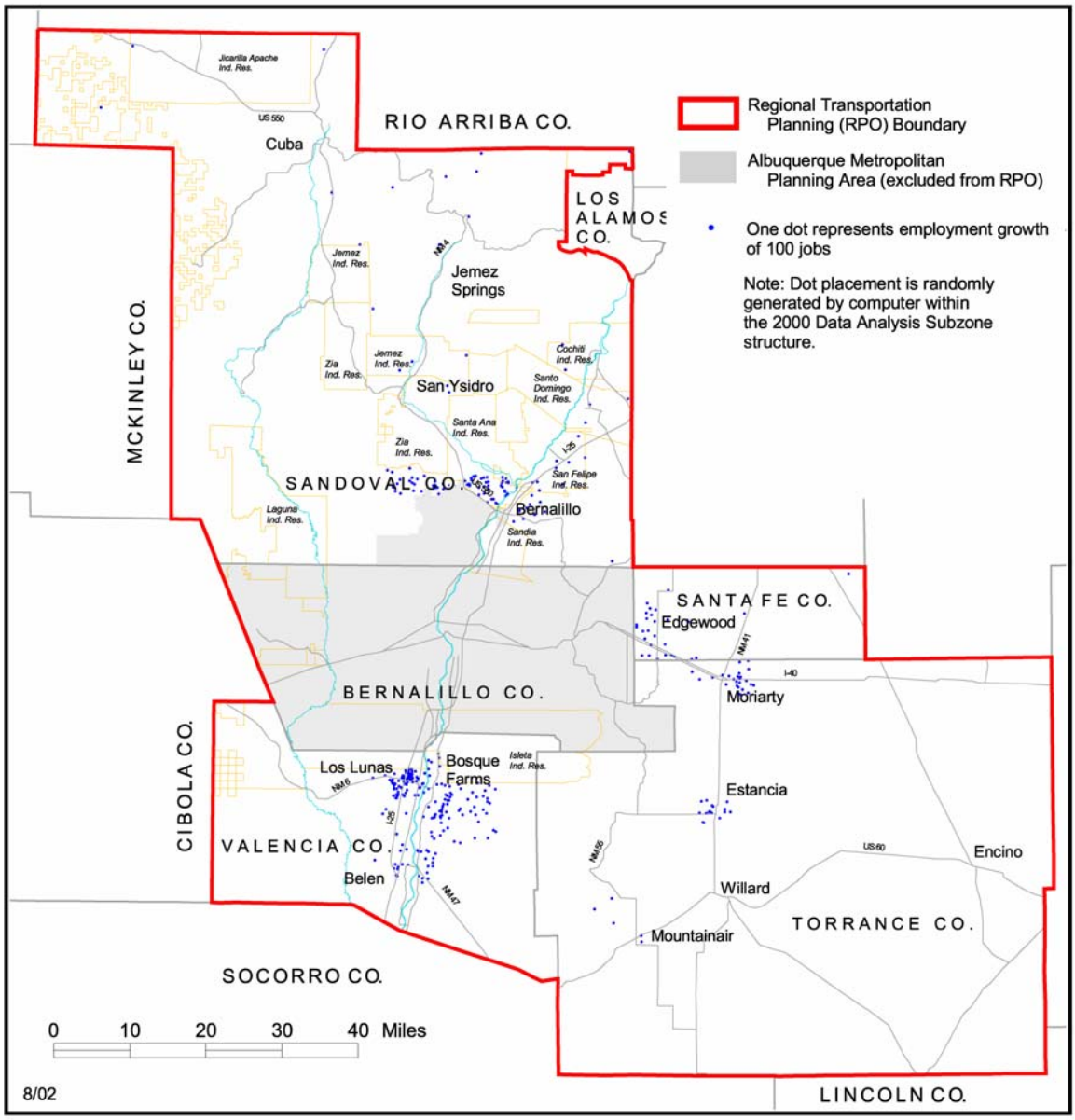

The data displayed on this map is based on an early iteration of the new MRCOG 2025 forecast. A new 2025 forecast based on the available 2000 Census data is currently being developed by MRCOG. The final forecast may present a different view.

Figure 8
Draft Employment Growth 2000-2025
by 2000 Data Analysis Subzone

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PART III

MAJOR TRANSPORTATION-RELATED ISSUES

Economic Vitality in the Region

The economy of the RPO region is fundamentally tied to the economy of the Albuquerque metropolitan area. The metropolitan economy is characterized as expanding and growing steadily if not rapidly. Population and employment in the region have generally doubled in the past 30 years. While the economic base has been traditionally dependent on the government sector, continuing diversification is seen with increased activity in the telecommunications, finance, and service sectors.

The regional economy is dominated by the intense urban development in Bernalillo County, with Albuquerque acting as the financial, educational, cultural, industrial, trade, medical, and business focal point for this region as well as the State. There are job opportunities in Bernalillo County for residents throughout the RPO region, and consequently, the proportion of out-of-county work trips in the RPO is significantly high. The rate of growth is higher in the RPO counties, increasing the extent of the commuter shed and the demand for capacity on the highway links into the Albuquerque area. Further diversification and expansion of the regional economy is anticipated in the future.

Safety and Security of Transportation Systems

Promoting and improving transportation is the highest priority for the U.S. Department of Transportation. Transportation in rural areas poses an even greater risk because of the greater isolation and distances from urban areas. Specific types of crashes, such as rail-highway grade crossing and run-off-the-road are more prevalent in rural areas. Crashes in rural areas are more likely to result in fatalities due to a combination of factors including extreme terrain, faster speeds, alcohol involvement, and longer time for medical treatment to reach crash victims or to be transported to medical treatment centers. Nearly 80 percent of the U.S.'s roadways are in rural areas; over 58 percent of the total fatalities occur in rural areas and the fatality rate for rural areas is more than twice that of urban areas (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2001).

The role of the New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau is to reduce and prevent deaths, injuries and crashes related to motor vehicles. This obligation to safety is especially important in a state that has historically been ranked in the top three nationally for traffic related deaths per capita. New Mexico has ranked number one or two the past decade in alcohol related traffic deaths per capita, and motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for New Mexicans below the age of 44.

As a result of these statistics, the New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau has developed a comprehensive, multiple strategy approach that includes prevention, education, screening and treatment, regulation, legislation, enforcement and deterrence initiatives. Operation Buckle Down has resulted in one of the highest seat belt use rates in the nation (88 percent), while Operation DWI has reduced alcohol-involved traffic fatalities by 25 percent (New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau).

With the exception of Belen and Los Lunas, the RPO is primarily a rural area. While not typically plagued by daily traffic problems found in urban settings, roads in the RPO area are at risk because of their remoteness from municipal areas. The most dangerous intersections in Sandoval, Torrance, Valencia, and southern Santa Fe counties are listed in Table 4 and Figure 9.

Table 4
Most Dangerous Intersections in the RPO by County

Torrance County

Street	Street	Intersection Rank	Total Crashes	Injured	Fatal
I-40	US 285	1	7	10	0
Howard Cavazos Blvd (5th St)	66 (Central Ave)	2	6	5	0
I-40	NM 41	3	6	4	0
Martinez Rd (CR A099)	CR A100/V-Hill	4	3	2	0
66 (Central Ave)	Lindburg Rd	5	2	4	0
Howard Cavazos Blvd. (5th St)	Roosevelt St	6	2	1	0
Howard Cavazos Blvd. (5th St)	Martinez Rd	7	2	0	0
Broadway St	66 (Central Ave)	8	2	0	0
66 (Central Ave)	NM 333	9	2	0	0
US 285	US 60	10	2	0	0

Valencia County

Street	Street	Intersection Rank	Total Crashes	Injured	Fatal
Main St	NM 47	1	16	2	0
Main St	Reinken Ave	2	15	7	0
NM 314 (Highway Ave)	Main St	3	10	12	0
Aragon Rd	Garcia Rd	4	10	5	0
Los Lentes Rd	Main St	5	8	3	0
Main St	Picard Ave	6	8	1	0
Main St	Santa Fe St	7	7	10	0
Edeal Rd	Main St	8	7	7	0
NM 263	NM 47	9	7	3	0
7th St	Reinken Ave	10	7	2	0

Sandoval County

Street	Street	Intersection Rank	Total Crashes	Injured	Fatal
Camino del Pueblo	US 550	1	10	10	0
US 550	NM 537	2	6	8	0
CR 11	US 550	3	4	4	0
Hill Rd	US 550	4	3	2	0
CR 496	NM 96	5	3	0	0
Cabazon Rd	US 550	6	2	0	0

Southern Santa Fe County

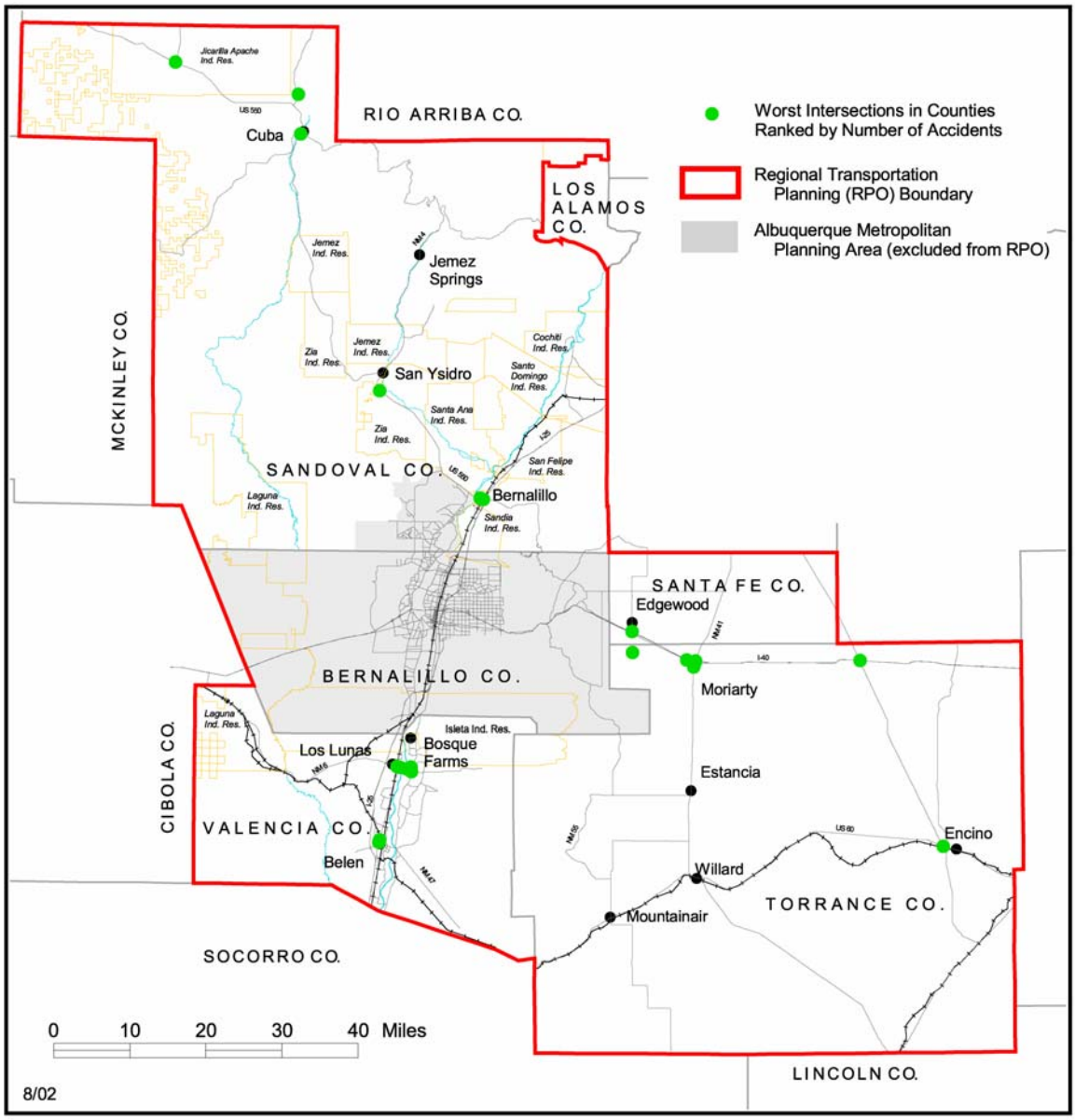
Street	Street	Intersection Rank	Total Crashes	Injured	Fatal
I-40	NM 344	1	8	4	0

The most dangerous intersections are located in four general locations throughout the RPO region. These four locations include the I-40 corridor in northern Torrance and southern Santa Fe Counties, the N.M. 47/N.M. 314 corridor in south central Valencia County between Los Lunas and Belen, the U.S. 550 corridor between Bernallilo and San Ysidro, and the U.S. 550 corridor in northern Sandoval County between Cuba and the Jicarilla Apache Pueblo.

Accessibility and Mobility for People and Freight

The NMSHTD and Public Transportation Programs Bureau (PTPB) are working to increase the accessibility and mobility options for people and freight. The PTPB provides a variety of programs to improve mobility in the state. These programs include the following: public transit service, welfare to work transportation, Rural Transportation Assistance Program, and Elderly and Disabled Specialized Transit.

The Middle Rio Grande Connections project is seeking to develop a strategic, high capacity transportation system plan that would improve accessibility for the Middle Rio Grande region. Public input for this process was sought through newsletters, brochures, public meetings, television and radio broadcasts and other activities. The recommended high-capacity transportation system has four components: high capacity transit (light rail, bus rapid transit, and other forms of enhanced transit), strategic freeways and expressways (to preserve and improve access between major population and employment centers and to improve alternative routes to the existing freeway system), commuter rail (a study of commuter rail connecting Belen to Bernalillo) and lane management (lanes dedicated for exclusive use by carpools, vanpools, buses, commercial trucks, or other similar uses).



Source: NM Traffic Safety Bureau,
Division of Government Research, UNM.

Figure 9
Worst Intersections by Number of Accidents in 2000

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Bicycling and pedestrian trails can also provide increased transportation options in a region. Bicycle and pedestrian trails are limited at the present time, but several trails are planned for Valencia County (Rio del Oro Trail, Greenways Trail, Rio Communities Core Link Trail, Bosque Loop, and the Delgado Street Trail). Environmental Justice is another federal program initiative that receives high priority from the Department of Transportation.

Good quality accessibility and mobility options should be available to all people, including minority, low-income and transit dependent populations. The transit dependent include the following groups: the elderly (age 65 and over), age groups under age 15, and low-income groups (which usually include a disproportionate number of minority groups).

The RPO can address these needs by working with the MPO to implement an Environmental Justice Program. Environmental Justice (EJ) is based upon three fundamental environmental justice principles: 1) to avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations, 2) to ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process, 3) to prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Federal regulations require that EJ be included in the transportation planning decision making process. Tables 5 and 6 display age and minority distribution by municipality based on 2000 U.S. Census data. Additional data on population and minority distribution by DASZ can be found in Appendix A. The data in the tables below suggest that some communities could be potentially affected by EJ. Communities with a high percentage of groups under age 15 or age 65 and over could be influenced by EJ. For example, all of the Indian Reservations have an exceedingly high proportion of their population under the age of 15. Non-Indian communities that have an elevated proportion of people under the age of 15 include Cuba, Torreon (Sandoval County), Edgewood, Moriarty, Tajique, El Cerro-Monterrey Park, Meadow Lake, and Rio Communities North. Communities that have a disproportionate number of elderly people include the following: Jemez Springs, La Jara, Regina, Encino, Manzano, Mountainair, Willard, Belen, and Rio Communities.

A community with an exceedingly high percentage of minorities could also be affected by EJ. Minority applies to a person who is Black, Hispanic, Asian American, or American Indian. As a result of the many Hispanic and Native American peoples, many New Mexico communities have an abnormally high percentage of minorities. However, some communities have an exceedingly high population of minorities. Those that have an exceedingly high population of minorities include all of the Indian Reservations, and the following communities: Algodones, Cuba, La Jara, Pena Blanca, Ponderosa, San Ysidro, Torreon (Sandoval County), Encino, Manzano, Tajique, Torreon (Torrance

County), Willard, Belen, Casa Colorada, and El Cerro-Monterey Park.

Communities that have high rates of both minority population and elderly or under age 15 population include all of the Indian Reservations and the following municipalities or CDP's: Cuba, La Jara, Torreon (Sandoval County), Encino, Manzano, Willard, Belen and El Cerro-Monterey Park.

Table 5
RPO Population by Age

	Under 15	Under 15 %	65 and over	65 and over %	Total Population
State of New Mexico	419,108	23.0%	212,225	11.7%	1,819,046
Sandoval County	22,112	24.6%	9,542	10.6%	89,908
Algodones CDP	149	21.7%	57	8.3%	688
Cochiti CDP	121	23.9%	79	15.6%	507
Cuba Village	154	26.1%	78	13.2%	590
Jemez Springs Village	66	17.6%	62	16.5%	375
Jemez Pueblo CDP	560	28.7%	131	6.7%	1,953
La Jara CDP	32	15.3%	41	19.6%	209
Pena Blanca CDP	164	24.8%	64	9.7%	661
Placitas CDP	557	16.1%	361	10.5%	3,452
Ponderosa CDP	57	18.4%	27	8.7%	310
Pueblo of Sandia Village	92	26.7%	27	7.8%	344
Regina CDP	8	8.1%	18	18.2%	99
San Felipe Pueblo CDP	647	31.1%	89	4.3%	2,080
Santa Ana Pueblo CDP	141	29.4%	44	9.2%	479
Santa Domingo Pueblo CDP	804	31.5%	164	6.4%	2,550
San Ysidro Village	56	23.5%	32	13.4%	238
Torreon CDP	107	36.0%	20	6.7%	297
Zia Pueblo CDP	190	29.4%	39	6.0%	646
Santa Fe County	25,638	19.8%	13,903	10.8%	129,292
Cedar Grove CDP	139	23.2%	55	9.2%	599
Edgewood Town	512	27.0%	122	6.4%	1,893
Torrance County	4,269	25.2%	1,647	9.7%	16,911
Encino Village	12	12.8%	20	21.3%	94
Estancia Town	270	17.0%	125	7.9%	1,584
Manzano CDP	13	24.1%	11	20.4%	54
Moriarty City	513	29.1%	190	10.8%	1,765
Mountainair Town	277	24.8%	196	17.6%	1,116
Tajique CDP	45	30.4%	15	10.1%	148
Torreon CDP	46	18.9%	34	13.9%	244
Willard Village	59	24.6%	40	16.7%	240
Valencia County	16,594	25.1%	6,723	10.2%	66,152
Belen City	1,660	24.1%	1,044	15.1%	6,901
Bosque Farms Village	808	20.6%	509	12.9%	3,931
Casa Colorada CDP	7	12.5%	7	12.5%	56

	Under 15	Under 15 %	65 and over	65 and over %	Total Population
Jarales CDP	360	25.1%	140	9.8%	1,434
Los Chaves CDP	1,222	24.3%	433	8.6%	5,033
Los Lunas Village	2,597	25.9%	891	8.9%	10,034
Los Trujillos-Gabaldon CDP	465	21.5%	277	12.8%	2,166
Meadow Lake CDP	1,464	32.6%	196	4.4%	4,491
Peralta CDP	893	23.8%	411	11.0%	3,750
Rio Communities CDP	813	19.3%	1,079	25.6%	4,213
Rio Communities North CDP	441	27.8%	107	6.7%	1,588
Tome-Adelino CDP	497	22.5%	209	9.5%	2,211
Valencia CDP	1,025	22.8%	453	10.1%	4,500

Table 6
RPO Minority Population by Community

	Total Pop	White Not Hispanic	Minority Total	Minority %
State of New Mexico	1,819,046	813,495	1,005,551	55.3%
Sandoval County	89,908	45,227	44,681	49.7%
Algodones CDP	688	162	526	76.5%
Cochiti CDP	507	9	498	98.2%
Cuba Village	590	71	519	88.0%
Jemez Springs Village	375	252	123	32.8%
Jemez Pueblo CDP	1,953	4	1,949	99.8%
La Jara CDP	209	41	168	80.4%
Pena Blanca CDP	661	82	579	87.6%
Placitas CDP	3,452	2,566	886	25.7%
Ponderosa CDP	310	82	228	73.5%
Pueblo of Sandia Village	344	7	337	98.0%
Regina CDP	99	71	28	28.3%
San Felipe Pueblo CDP	2,080	1	2,079	100.0%
Santa Ana Pueblo CDP	478	2	476	99.6%
Santa Domingo Pueblo CDP	2,550	5	2,545	99.8%
San Ysidro Village	238	45	193	81.1%
Torreon CDP	297	20	277	93.3%
Zia Pueblo CDP	646	0	646	100.0%
Santa Fe County	129,292	58,790	70,502	54.5%
Cedar Grove CDP	599	456	143	23.9%
Edgewood Town	1,893	1,447	446	23.6%
Torrance County	16,911	9,677	7,234	42.8%
Encino Village	94	17	77	81.9%
Estancia Town	1,584	570	1,014	64.0%
Manzano CDP	54	6	48	88.9%
Moriarty City	1,765	978	787	44.6%
Mountainair Town	1,116	466	650	58.2%
Tajique CDP	148	28	120	81.1%

	Total Pop	White Not Hispanic	Minority Total	Minority %
Willard Village	240	35	205	85.4%
Valencia County	66,152	26,087	40,065	60.6%
Belen City	6,901	1,920	4,981	72.2%
Bosque Farms Village	3,931	2,616	1,315	33.5%
Casa Colorada CDP	56	12	44	78.6%
El Cerro-Monterey Park CDP	5,483	1,258	4,225	77.1%
Jarales CDP	1,434	477	957	66.7%
Los Chaves CDP	5,033	2,137	2,896	57.5%
Los Lunas Village	10,034	3,715	6,319	63.0%
Los Trujillos-Gabaldon CDP	2,166	743	1,423	65.7%
Meadow Lake CDP	4,491	1,596	2,895	64.5%
Peralta CDP	3,750	1,649	2,101	56.0%
Rio Communities CDP	4,213	2,416	1,797	42.7%
Rio Communities North CDP	1,588	798	790	49.7%
Tome-Adelino CDP	2,211	753	1,458	65.9%
Valencia CDP	4,500	2,067	2,433	54.1%

Environmental Considerations

As a result of moderate to rapid population and job growth throughout the RPO region, many municipalities are facing environmental challenges. The challenge is to maintain the vitality of these areas while preserving and protecting natural, historic, scenic, and cultural environments.

The Department of Transportation has many programs that are directed specifically toward protecting and enhancing the environment that is affected by transportation. These programs include Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), Transportation Enhancements, Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways, Recreational Trails Program, National Scenic Byways Program, and Transportation and Community and System Preservation Pilot Program.

Transportation Enhancements in the RPO area currently in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) include the Rio del Oro Trail, Rio Communities Core Links, the Delgado Street Trail, the Bosque Loop, and landscaping on the Moriarity Business Loop from Tulane to Hazel.

National Scenic Byways in the RPO area include Jemez Mountain Trail, El Camino Real Historic Trail, Salt Missions Trail, Route 66, Abo Pass Trail, and Turquoise Trail. National Scenic Byways projects included in the STIP include the following: San Ysidro “Gateway” Facility, Jemez Springs Comfort Station, and the Corridor Master Plan Review, all of which are located along the Jemez Mountain Trail.

Integration and Connectivity of Transportation Systems

The U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration have worked to enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes throughout the nation, for people and freight. Section 5309 capital funding (new starts) helps to provide better integration and connectivity of transportation systems by providing funding for new rail, busway projects (such as multi-modal facilities), and improvement and maintenance of existing rail and other fixed guideway systems.

Valencia County is building a multi-modal facility in Los Lunas with Section 5309 capital funds. This facility will have the capacity to accommodate buses, vans, rail, various transportation offices, and will improve the transportation linkages between modes throughout Valencia County. An intermodal facility is also in the discussion stages in Valencia County for a location near the north Belen interchange. This particular facility would provide for the transfer of large shipping containers between rail and semi tractor trailers.

Improved ground access to the region's aviation facilities is another intermodal project needed in the RPO. Specifically, the airports in Estancia and Mountainair are accessed by dirt roads leading to dirt runways.

Efficient Transportation System Management

In order to promote efficient transportation system management and operation, the RPO seeks to function as an extension of the metropolitan transportation systems planning process and as a regional contributor to the State's long range planning process. As corridor and subarea studies are carried out, systems analysis is a principal objective to the extent possible. Traffic modeling, although limited in application in the RPO area, is part of the methodology for assessing and justifying the need for proposed capacity improvements or new connections to road networks. Also, RPO coordination is encouraged in any transportation system studies affecting this region such as the MRG Connections, High Capacity Transportation System Study, and the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) planning efforts.

Preservation of Existing Infrastructure and Services

Maintaining existing infrastructure and services is crucial to a successful transportation system. In New Mexico, the top priority among transportation issues is preserving and maintaining roads. NMSHTD's statewide transportation surveys in 1996 and 2000 ranked the maintaining of existing roads ahead of increasing traffic safety, building new roads, and reducing congestion. The 2000 survey also showed that 76% believe that failure to maintain roads would be a serious problem for them (which was down from 80% in 1996), and that 82% believe that maintaining New Mexico's roads

are important for the state economy. The majority of those polled also believed that roads and highways should be the main focus of NMSHTD. However this percentage dropped from 65% in 1996 to 58% in 2000, with rail, transit, and bicycle/pedestrian modes equally dividing the change. While road maintenance remains the top priority, there is a perception that New Mexico roads are worse than those in neighboring states. This percentage increased from 49% in 1996 to 54% in 2000, and shows that a lot of road maintenance work still needs to be accomplished.

PART IV

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

Public involvement is a key element of transportation decision making. Engaging the public is an essential part of successful project development and should begin during the long range transportation system planning process. A public involvement plan was integral to the development of this Regional Long Range Transportation Plan.

Formats and Methodology

The Public Involvement Plan designed for developing the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan utilized a variety of meetings at different levels, some publicly announced, and others through the organizational structure of the RPO. The major purpose of the meetings was to present draft elements of the Plan, gather citizen recommendations and comments regarding transportation issues, and to review the Plan as it progressed. As a supplement to the input from meetings, the RPO staff also conducted surveys to aid in clarifying issues and setting priorities for transportation planning actions.

Involvement Through Meetings

Meetings provided the most significant input to the development of the Long Range Plan report. Several different kinds of meetings were conducted during this planning process and are described in detail below. All meetings were conducted with specific agendas and purposes to develop the components of this Plan. Certain key meetings were advertised to the public in newspapers of general circulation in the RPO region.

Transportation Advisory Committee (RPOTAC) meetings The Transportation Advisory Committee (RPOTAC) is made up of members who are elected officials or their designated alternate representatives of county, municipal, and special purpose units of local government having jurisdiction within the geographic boundaries of the Regional Planning Organization. Tribal governments are eligible to be members; however none have formally appointed representatives to the RPOTAC. There is participation of Tribal observers and BIA staff at many of the RPOTAC meetings. The RPO area is defined as the non-metropolitan portion of State Planning and Development District 3 including Sandoval, Torrance, and Valencia Counties, and a portion of southern Santa Fe County. The RPO area is located outside but adjacent to the designated Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA).

The purpose of the RPOTAC is to provide a regional forum for cooperative decision making on transportation issues within the RPO, to provide policy guidance, project priorities, and technical assistance in the development of transportation plans

and programs in the RPO. Meetings of the RPOTAC are advertised in local newspapers and are structured to provide an opportunity for public comment on transportation issues and proposed plans and projects. The function of the TAC is to review and comment on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP), to provide an opportunity for public participation in the preparation and review of the STIP, to review and comment on transportation-related data collected for the RPO, to coordinate transportation planning issues between the RPO and the MPO, and to provide MRCOG staff with guidance and support in the development of an Annual Work Program and a Transportation Improvement Program. The RPOTAC also convenes to rank the applications submitted for Public Transportation Program funding.

RPOTAC meetings were held to review and discuss the progress of the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. The RPOTAC reviewed and approved the goals and objectives for the plan and subsequently adopted strategic action recommendations which set forth the priorities of the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan.

Regional Plan Task Group (RPTG) The Regional Plan Task Group was created as an ad hoc group of citizens from the RPO planning area to assist in the development of the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. This group helped with the formulation of the Goals and Objectives and Strategic Action Recommendations, assisted with the Key Person Interview Questionnaire, and provided priority ratings for the Objectives. RPTG members were appointed by members of the RPOTAC. RPTG members were not members of the RPOTAC, but generally represented the affected communities, educational institutions, private sector interests, or stakeholder groups involved in the region's transportation programs or systems.

Annual County Meetings with District Engineers The Annual County Meetings with Highway District Engineers are held in each of the counties in the RPO area, including Sandoval County (Districts 6 &3), Torrance County (District 5), and Valencia County (District 3). The purpose of these publicly advertised meetings is to review and discuss the transportation projects that are programmed in the STIP, and to identify other county transportation needs (both long-range and short-range). The District Engineers are available at these meetings to answer questions, provide technical assistance, and resolve any problems concerning transportation in the county. Potential projects can be submitted by counties, municipalities, Native American tribes, special purpose governments, Bureau of Indian Affairs, N.M. State Aviation Division, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, or any other entity that is eligible to sponsor relevant project development.

A preliminary (ongoing) compilation of projected needs was prepared for Sandoval, Torrance, Valencia, and southern Santa Fe Counties. These needs were presented at the Annual County Meetings with District Engineers. The entire list of preliminary compilation of projected needs can be found in Appendix C.

Citizen Conferences in Highway Districts (NMSHTD) A Citizen Conference for long range transportation planning was hosted by the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department and the UNM Institute for Public Policy (IPP). A group of randomly chosen New Mexicans was chosen to learn about road construction, highway funding, and the transportation planning process. This meeting included a morning question and answer session where Citizen Advisors discussed transportation issues with state and local transportation professionals, and an afternoon session where the Citizen Advisors deliberated on what they learned and then developed a list of recommendations for transportation planning throughout the state. This meeting was facilitated by a trained moderator from the IPP.

The Citizen Advisors then presented their recommendations to NMSHTD, the press, and local citizens. Following the presentation by the Citizen Advisors, the general public and local public officials joined in the discussion.

Regional Public Meetings Regional Public Meetings were held so the public could receive a presentation of the Plan as it developed and participate in the preparation and review of the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. The Open Meetings Resolution adopted annually by the MRCOG requires that legal notices of regularly scheduled meetings be placed in general circulation newspapers at least ten days in advance of major policy and decision-making meetings of MRCOG Boards and Committees. In addition, written notice is mailed to FCC licensed broadcast stations and general circulation newspapers. A proposed agenda is posted in the offices of the MRCOG during the week before the meeting, and is also available on the MRCOG website one week before the meeting.

Two public meetings were conducted for presenting the major components of the Long Range Plan. The first public meeting was held to discuss the draft goals and objectives for the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. Comment Sheets were also handed out to solicit individual suggestions, opinions, and views regarding the transportation planning process. The second public meeting was carried out for the purpose of presenting the draft Strategic Plan Recommendations which provided the basic framework for the Long Range Plan. Refinements were made to the Strategic Plan Recommendations based on public comments and subsequent recommendations made at the follow-up RPOTAC meeting.

Organization and Outreach

A transportation-related mailing list is maintained at the MRCOG office to establish contact with members of the RPOTAC, RPTG, and local elected officials and transmit up to date information on the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan and related happenings in the RPO. In addition to the mailing list, press releases were sent out before each public meeting, notifying the public through general circulation

newspapers in advance of meetings. The MRCOG also maintains a website with a section devoted to the RPO planning process.

Feedback Techniques

A number of methods are used to gather feedback on the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. The Regional Plan Task Group was the steering committee for the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan with the role of identifying transportation needs, priorities, and issues; formulating, reviewing and revising goals and objectives and plan recommendations; and identifying key persons to be contacted for surveys and interviews. Additional methods for acquiring feedback include the gathering of written comment forms after public meetings, posting RPO information such as the goals and objectives on the MRCOG website with email contacts, and conducting key person interview questionnaires.

During June 2002, key person interview questionnaires with cover letters were mailed to a group of individuals throughout the RPO region considered to be prominent citizens in their communities. Follow-up phone calls were also made two weeks later to those who had not responded. The purpose of the questionnaire was to investigate the concerns, principles, and opinions of citizens regarding transportation issues throughout the region. The questionnaire inquired about many important transportation issues facing the RPO, including transportation priorities, safety concerns, traffic calming needs, environmental issues, busy travel corridors and intersections, transportation alternatives, support for bicycle and pedestrian trails, public transportation, and transportation hubs. The questionnaire asked respondents to identify key locations where transportation alternatives, transportation hubs, and traffic calming would best work. Citizens also identified the locations of specific travel corridors and intersections that they believe have serious traffic problems or will have serious problems in the next twenty years.

Key Person Interview Questionnaire Results

A total of 77 Key Person Interview Questionnaires were mailed out and 32 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 41.5%. The opinions expressed in the questionnaire may or may not be representative of all citizens in RPO region; however they do provide a sampling of the public perspective on an assortment of essential transportation issues relating to this region.

The questionnaire revealed that the top transportation priority in the RPO was road maintenance and improvements, such as paving, resurfacing, and road widening. Another top priority was a new east-west transportation corridor (river crossing) in Valencia County; however, this priority was specific to Valencia County. Other high priority issues included public transportation and traffic congestion improvements.

The questionnaire also indicated that road maintenance and improvements were the top safety concerns throughout the RPO. Other transportation safety concerns were traffic calming (reducing speeding in high pedestrian areas), reducing traffic congestion, better signage, more bicycle/pedestrian routes and trails to protect bicyclists and pedestrians, school busing, and wildlife along the highway.

The respondents to the questionnaire were split almost evenly (14 - yes and 13 - no) when asked if traffic calming techniques are needed to reduce heavy truck traffic in their communities. Respondents identified areas with high pedestrian or child activity as areas that needed speed humps, speed bumps, or traffic flow barriers.

Protection of the environment and promoting energy conservation were identified as important transportation issues by those responding to the questionnaire. Respondents from Valencia, Sandoval, and Santa Fe Counties were in overwhelming support of environment protection, while Torrance County was evenly split on this issue.

The following roads, travel corridors, and/or intersections were identified to have the most serious traffic problems or will have the most serious traffic problems in the next twenty years: US 60, NM 47, I-40/NM344, NM 55, NM 6, NM 4, US 550, NM 314, and NM 337. When asked what should be done about the traffic problems on these roads, the majority of the respondents believed the best solution was road maintenance and improvements. Construction of new roads and installation of more traffic signals also generated a high level of agreement among respondents. Other suggestions included: reducing the speed limit with more traffic calming applications; improved transportation systems to enhance economic development; requiring developers to pay transportation costs in places where they are responsible for increased traffic flow; and placing specific roads as high priorities on local master plans.

The majority of the respondents (18-yes, 11-no) believed that transportation alternatives such as public transit, carpooling, vanpooling, park and ride lots, bicycling, and walking would work in their community. Valencia County was the strongest supporter of this issue, while Torrance County was split on this matter. The majority of the respondents also believed that bicycle routes and pedestrian trails would be used in their communities (16-yes, 12-no). However, while Sandoval and Valencia Counties were in strong support of bicycle and pedestrian trails, Torrance County was generally opposed to this measure. Popular locations mentioned for potential bicycle routes and pedestrian trails were along the Rio Grande Bosque, the Bosque Loop, Belen Main Street and Mesa Road and River Road in Belen.

The majority of the respondents were not interested in supporting a public transportation system that would provide public bus and/or rail service sometime in the next twenty years (10 – yes, 14 – no). However, Valencia County respondents did register strong support for a public transportation system. Respondents were split when asked if public bus service or commuter railroads would alleviate transportation

problems in the community (11 – yes, 12 – no). Respondents from Valencia County again pledged stronger support to these issues, while Torrance County once more was strongly opposed to bus service and commuter railroads.

Respondents were overwhelmingly in support of establishing regional transportation hubs (bringing together services such as carpooling, vanpooling, park-and-ride, bus, taxi, travel information, commuter rail, and visitors' center in one location) in their communities (17 – yes, 6 – no). To see the entire results and all responses to the transportation questionnaire, go to Appendix D.

PART V

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

Goals, objectives, and strategies have been formulated as the fundamental basis for this Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. Goals are broad, visionary statements describing a desired future direction or condition for the region. Objectives are related statements that describe how goals might be achieved. Strategies are specific action statements that provide a particular approach that can be taken to carry out an objective.

These goals, objectives and strategies were generated through a review of local policy statements regarding existing needs and priorities, input from the Annual County Meetings with District Engineers and Highway Department staff, meetings of the Regional Plan Task Group (RPTG), by correlation with the MPO goals and metropolitan plan, and by MRCOG staff research on federal and state requirements. The goals, objectives and strategies of the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan were modified and refined after public comments and proposals. These goals, objectives and strategies are not mandatory; however they form the heart of the Plan and establish a sound basis for current and future programs, projects, and local regulations.

Transportation Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Goal A: Maintain and improve the existing regional highway network.

Objective: Improve highway monitoring systems at all levels (Federal, State, and local) to identify system deficiencies.

Strategy: Assist the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department in identification of deficient bridges.

Strategy: Establish local road condition inventory systems.

Objective: Counties and municipalities should identify priorities for road maintenance and improvements from high to low priority over the next 20 years.

Goal B: Establish a comprehensive road network of sufficient capacity to meet local and regional circulation needs.

Objective: Investigate and implement traffic management and control measures throughout the community.

Strategy: Designate local “classification” of streets in

municipalities and adopt associated right-of-way and construction standards.

Strategy: Utilize MAP in all municipalities and CAP in all counties.

Objective: Develop a standard Traffic Impact Analysis process to study the effects of proposed large scale developments on the surrounding transportation system.

Objective: Establish major study corridors within the regional planning area, both existing and future, for intensive evaluation.

Strategy: Identify and maintain a list of potential study corridors including but not limited to the following:

- Rio Grande valley corridor;
- Jemez Mountain loop road;
- I-40 corridor in Torrance & Santa Fe Co. including future new interchanges;
- N.M. 47 corridor in Valencia Co.;
- N.M. 66 in Torrance Co.;
- N.M. 337 in Torrance Co.;
- N.M. 41 in Torrance Co.;
- N.M. 333 in southern Santa Fe & Torrance Co.;
- N.M. 344 in southern Santa Fe Co.;
- U.S. 60 in Torrance Co.;
- I-25 to N.M. 314 in Valencia Co. (future); and
- I-25 to Manzano Expressway in Valencia Co. (future).

Goal C: Ensure the safety of the local transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

Objective: Identify unsafe highway situations and rank traffic safety improvements from high to low priority over the next 20 years.

Strategy: Create an inventory of unsafe highway situations including but not limited to the following categories:

- Poor or inadequate lighting.
- Extensive potholes or pavement breakdown.

- Dangerous intersections, curves, and railroad crossings.
- Unprotected or unsafe bicycle routes.
- Significant traffic mix of farm vehicles.

Objective: Develop a standard process for justifying and installing traffic calming measures.

Strategy: Establish a common list of procedures for determining critical locations and necessity of:

- Speed bumps or humps;
- Rotary intersections;
- On-street parking; and
- Walkways.

Objective: Develop a regional system of emergency response to accidents involving hazardous materials spills.

Objective: Utilize Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technology to alert travelers to major road and bridge construction locations, and road and weather conditions. This technology could be accessed by road signs, the internet, radio, or cell phones.

Objective: Insure the safety of school bus routes.

Strategy: Conduct an evaluation of school bus routes for safety and accessibility.

Goal D: Preserve the physical and cultural environment.

Objective: Minimize automobile pollution by reducing vehicle miles traveled and improving mobility in congested areas.

Objective: Minimize impacts of stormwater runoff from highways and other transportation facilities.

Objective: Reduce negative impacts on parks, public open space, and rural areas from noise and visual impacts.

Objective: Consult with Tribes and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to designate culturally-sensitive areas for consideration of restricted travel and access.

Objective: Discourage visual obstructions such as billboards, particularly on

scenic and historic byways.

Objective: Eradicate and control noxious weeds (as defined by state and federal agencies) along roads and highways.

Goal E: Increase effective use of mass transportation and non-vehicular alternatives to improve regional access and circulation.

Objective: Provide local and regional transit service to the transit dependent (e.g., elderly, disabled, low income individuals, students).

Strategy: Encourage coordination among all private and public transportation service providers.

Objective: Provide a regional, comprehensive, and coordinated multimodal transportation system.

Strategy: Conduct feasibility studies for commuter rail, light rail, and express bus systems.

Objective: On selected routes, provide public transportation that is faster and cheaper than travel by personal auto for the individual user.

Strategy: Identify appropriate corridors, feasible public transportation systems, and public subsidy funding mechanisms that together make public transportation desirable for broad use.

Objective: Adopt a regional bicycle and multi-use trail network that provides alternatives to the street network.

Strategy:
1. Designate specific roads as bicycle routes.
2. Identify roads for adding bicycle lanes.
3. Establish multi-use trail routes or corridors.

Objective: Encourage rideshare services (i.e., carpools and vanpools) for commuting to and from work. Provide park and ride lots.

Objective: Increase opportunities for telecommuting by improving the region's telecommunications infrastructure in rural areas.

Objective: Promote and advertise the benefits of a variety of transportation alternatives.

Strategy: Emphasize decreased traffic congestion and air pollution, estimated money saved by commuting instead of driving a single occupant vehicle, Commuter Choice benefits, and less stress by allowing someone else to do the driving.

Goal F: Encourage mixed-use and clustering land development to reduce travel distances and sprawl.

Objective: Adjust local zoning laws to allow flexibility for mixed-use zoning in regional activity centers and other appropriate areas.

Objective: Create incentives for development clusters on major travel routes with transit options.

Goal G: Provide for a fully integrated, multimodal, and intermodal transportation system for the region.

Objective: Establish regional multimodal, intermodal transportation centers that can provide for carpooling, vanpooling, park-and-ride express, connections between local and regional transportation systems, a local bus stop, taxi pick-up, travel information, access to rail (if applicable), and a visitors center.

Strategy: Identify potential locations for multimodal hubs.

Objective: Establish a Regional Transit Authority providing services to all contributing communities in the region.

Objective: Consider freight movement concerns in the regional transportation planning process.

Objective: Improve the aviation transportation system in the RPO area to provide greater options for multimodal transportation and economic development.

Strategy: Bring all airports in the RPO area to minimum safety standards for aircraft using them.

Strategy: Investigate the potential for a system of heliports to augment the aviation system.

Strategy: Assess and improve airport security at all

airports in the region.

Goal H: Adopt and annually update a regional long range transportation plan as a basis for programming improvements.

Objective: Maintain a long range transportation planning process through the Regional Planning Organization (RPO) as recommended by the Transportation Advisory Committee and approved by the MRCOG Board of Directors.

Objective: Provide for continuous coordination between the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Regional Planning Organization of the MRCOG.

Objective: Develop dedicated and sustained funding sources.

Goal I: Promote energy conservation to enhance the quality and livability of communities.

Objective: Encourage energy-efficient modes of travel.

Objective: Promote use of alternative fuels and provide incentives for reducing emissions of vehicular pollutants.

Identification of Regional Transportation Priorities

The goals and objectives were identified and ultimately finalized in meetings of the RPTG and the general public. These goals and objectives provide policy direction as the core of the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan. These goals and objectives provide a blueprint or framework for specific actions which may be taken in the future. However, in order to achieve these goals and objectives, priorities need to be set. Prioritizing goals and objectives ultimately leads to the identification of strategic actions. Strategic actions are specific action statements that describe how a multiple listing of objectives can be carried out over a long range schedule.

To assist in identifying these strategic actions, members of the RPTG were asked to prioritize the approved transportation objectives. Respondents were asked to evaluate the objectives by rating them on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 is low, 5 is high). Respondents to the survey gave the highest priority to objectives in Goal H (adopt and annually update a regional long range transportation plan as a basis for programming improvements). These highly rated objectives are concerned with developing dedicated and sustained funding sources, maintaining a long range transportation process on an annual basis, and providing for continuous coordination between the RPO and the MPO. Annually updating the long range transportation plan will allow for more analysis,

increased cooperation between the RPO and MPO, and ultimately lead to enhanced strategic actions.

Both objectives under Goal A (maintain and improve the existing regional highway network) received high ratings. Identifying priority rankings for road maintenance and improving highway monitoring systems at all levels to identify system deficiencies are the key components of these objectives. Two of the objectives under Goal G (provide for a fully integrated, multimodal, and intermodal transportation system for the region) were given extremely high ratings. The two objectives that received the strongest support included establishing multimodal/intermodal transportation hubs and establishing a regional transit authority. Los Lunas and Bernalillo are already proposed as multimodal transportation hubs (see Figure 6), and are receiving or will be receiving financial support in the near future. Considering freight movement concerns in the regional transportation process was also given firm support. Belen is currently being examined as a potential site for a regional intermodal transportation center that would deal with both rail and road freight. Semi-trailers and cargo containers would be unloaded from rail cars and then transported by truck to their respective destinations.

All of the objectives under Goal B (establish a comprehensive road network of sufficient capacity to meet local and regional circulation needs) received strong ratings. The objective receiving the strongest support deals with establishing major study corridors within the regional planning area for intensive evaluation. Developing a standard Traffic Impact Analysis process and investigating and implementing traffic management and control measures also received strong support.

The objectives under Goal I (promoting energy conservation to enhance the quality and livability of communities) received considerable support. These objectives are related to promoting energy efficient modes of travel and promoting the use of alternate fuels and providing incentives for reducing emissions.

The objectives related to safety and Goal C (ensure the safety of the local transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users) were ranked relatively low. However, the objective that identified unsafe highway situations and ranked traffic safety improvements from high to low priority ranked very high. The other safety objective that received strong support was insuring the safety of school bus routes. Utilizing ITS technology, developing a standard process for installing traffic calming measures, and developing regional response accidents involving hazardous materials spills were all among the lowest ranked objectives.

While support for multimodal hubs and a Regional Transit Authority (Goal G) was high, backing for Goal E (increase effective use of mass transportation and non-vehicular alternatives to improve regional access and circulation) was considerably lower. Adopting a regional bicycle and multi-use trail network to provide alternatives to the street network was among the lowest rated of all the objectives. The objectives

concerned with promoting and advertising the benefits of transportation alternatives and providing public transportation that was faster and cheaper than travel by personal auto also ranked fairly low. However, there was very strong support for providing a regional, comprehensive, and coordinated multimodal transportation system, as well as enthusiastic support for encouraging rideshare services.

Goal F received low to moderate support for encouraging mixed-use and clustering land development to reduce travel distances and sprawl. Goal D (preserving the physical and cultural environment) received the least amount of support from the Regional Plan Task Group. Conversely, the objective discouraging visual obstructions such as billboards on scenic and historic byways received strong support, as did the objective that would minimize automobile pollution by reducing the number of vehicle miles traveled. The objectives dealing with eradicating and controlling noxious weeds along roads, consulting with Tribes and SHPO to designate culturally sensitive areas for restricted travel, and reducing negative impacts on parks, public open space, and rural areas from noise and visual impacts all ranked very low. To see the entire results and all priority ratings go to Appendix E.

PART VI

STRATEGIC ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of this Regional Long Range Transportation Plan is subject to future considerations and actions at various levels of government for the planning, development, and maintenance of transportation facilities and services in the Mid-Region RPO area. Nevertheless, this plan establishes goals, objectives, and localized strategies intended to provide a common basis for transportation policies that may be initiated by any or all of the numerous governmental jurisdictions in the region. In following through with these goals and objectives, Strategic Action Recommendations have been formulated and approved in order to define a regional action and implementation plan with priorities suggested by time sequencing or scheduling.

Presented below are the Strategic Action Recommendations of the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan for the Mid-Region RPO. This listing of recommendations was developed as an outcome of data analysis and research, consensus on goals and objectives (with a rating and ranking of objectives), results of interview surveys, and consultation with the NMSHTD staff. The following actions have been placed into a time frame based on reasonable expectations, funding realities and priorities determined through the planning process. Because some recommended actions described herein are immediate or already in progress, a grouping of actions are characterized as ongoing programs and projects. Otherwise, the scheduling of strategic actions is categorized into short range (within 8 years), intermediate (8-12 years), or long range (12-20 years). As a regional plan in scope, these actions may be carried out by the region as a whole or as a common action undertaken by multiple jurisdictions in this region. Furthermore, coordination and cooperation in the future development of regional transportation systems can be achieved with the endorsement of this Plan by the individual governments that comprise this RPO.

Ongoing Programs and Projects

- Maintain a project needs listing to ensure preservation and maintenance of the existing network of roads and highways throughout the region.
- Develop dedicated and sustained funding sources and revenue generating capabilities for local governments.
- Carry out a long range comprehensive planning process linking transportation with other regional plans and programs, such as:
    1) Land use management to achieve balance of jobs and housing,
    2) Regional economic development, and
    3) Protection of water resources.
- Continue to increase regional coordination and involvement with the Metropolitan Planning Organization.
- Implement traffic management and control measures where feasible and warranted in urbanizing areas, including the following:

1) Traffic calming techniques,
2) Parking management, and
3) Signalized intersections.

- Continue to promote the opportunities and benefits of alternatives to the current transportation system in order to reduce vehicle miles of travel and single occupancy vehicles.
    1) Mass transit,
    2) Ridesharing programs, and
    3) Promotion of home-based businesses.
- Utilize Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technology to control and manage regional traffic flow during transportation network breakdown.

Short Range Strategic Actions (within 8 years)

- Establish and standardize local monitoring and evaluation programs to identify needs and priorities for transportation improvements. Monitoring should focus on the following considerations:
    1) Deteriorating road conditions and system deficiencies,
    2) Safety (i.e., high accident locations, school bus routes),
    3) Traffic flow data and characteristics,
    4) Utility corridors overlying road network, and
    5) Traffic impact analysis for proposed development.
- Designate and establish regional Park and Ride Lots, initially in the following general locations:
    1) Town of Bernalillo at I-25,
    2) City of Moriarty at I-40,
    3) Los Lunas at N.M. 314, and
    4) Intersection of Frost Road and N.M. 14.
- Promote and extend the regional ridesharing program for commuters and for special purpose trips to metro area destinations or regional activities.
- Promote and coordinate public transit services in rural and small town communities throughout the region.

Intermediate Strategic Actions (8-12 years)

- Conduct major corridor location and sub-area studies in three urbanizing and congested areas within the planning region:
    1) Rio Grande valley of Valencia County,
    2) Southern Sandoval County, and
    3) Northwest Torrance and Southern Santa Fe Counties.
- Develop a region-wide system of multiple use trails and bicycle routes.
- Designate and expand regional transportation centers to provide for multi-modal transportation services and inter-modal transportation activities, initially in the following general locations to enhance Park and Ride Lots:
    1) Town of Bernalillo at I-25,
    2) City of Moriarty at I-40,

3) Los Lunas at N.M. 314, and
4) Intersection of Frost Road and N.M. 14.

Long Range Strategic Actions (12-20 years)

- Establish a regional transit authority providing services to outlying communities in the region.
- Upgrade the regional system of publicly owned airports with all-weather runways, aircraft services, and inter-modal facilities at the following airports:
  1) Moriarty Municipal Airport,
  2) Belen Alexander Municipal Airport,
  3) Estancia Airport, and Mountainair Airport.

Financial Options

Federal Government Funding Federal funds administered by the NMSHTD are appropriated, authorized and distributed through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Federal aid projects generally require state or local matching funds of approximately 10-25%. Additional information can be found at the Federal Highway Administration's web site [www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/factsheets/index.htm].

Federal Highway Administration Funds The following funding programs are generally available in this region:

Bridge State, Local and Off-System funds are for the replacement or rehabilitation of bridges at least 20-feet long and have a qualifying "sufficiency rating," generally 80-50 or lower. The New Mexico Highway Commission makes fifteen percent of the Bridge funds available for use of non-State Highway System bridges. The FHWA maintains a list of priority bridges to be considered.

Forest Highway funds are administered by the Western Federal Lands Highways Division. They are for improvements on any federal, state, or local roadway designated as a forest highway and serving a national forest.

Indian Reservation Roads funds are administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They are for the maintenance, rehabilitation, or reconstruction of reservation roads and bridges.

Interstate Maintenance funds are for resurfacing, restoring, rehabilitating, or reconstructing the Interstate highway system. Adding capacity to the existing system may not be funded under this program except for high-occupancy vehicle lanes or auxiliary lanes such as truck climbing lanes.

National Highway System funds are for the reconstruction or rehabilitation of roadways on the congressionally designated National Highway System. This system includes the Interstates and most of New Mexico's major U.S. and state highways.

Recreational Trails funds are administered by the New Mexico Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department. They are for the development and maintenance of motorized and non-motorized recreational trails.

State Planning and Research funds are allocated to the state and used to perform statewide transportation planning.

Surface Transportation Program (STP) Enhancement funds are available to fund eligible enhancement activities under all twelve primary category of "enhancement" projects – example: (1) bicycle and pedestrian, (2) historic, and (3) scenic and environmental. Projects must be related to the surface transportation system.

Surface Transportation Program (STP) Hazard Elimination/Rail funds are for safety projects to reduce accidents at identified hazardous locations and for bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements, including on-road facilities, public trails, and traffic calming activities, or for projects that improve motorist protection at railroad crossings. These funds are available for any state or local public road.

Surface Transportation Program (STP) Rural Areas funds are for projects in rural areas, and in cities with populations below 5,000. They are primarily used for reconstruction or rehabilitation of roadways functionally classified as rural major collectors or higher. These funds may also be used for planning, enhancement, transit, bridge, or safety activities. The local governments and the Regional Planning Organization's assist NMSHTD in the administration of this federal program.

Surface Transportation Program (STP)—Urban Under 200,000 funds are for projects in urban areas (5,000 population or greater). They are primarily used for reconstruction or rehabilitation of roadways functionally classified with FHWA as urban collectors or higher. These funds may also be used for planning, enhancement, transit, bridge, or safety activities. The Local Governments, RPO's, and Metropolitan Planning Organizations assist NMSHTD in the administration of this federal program. Transportation Management Areas (200,000 population or greater) receive a specific allocation of funds that is drawn from New Mexico's STP—Large Urban funds.

Surface Transportation Program (STP)—State funds primarily provide funding for reconstruction or rehabilitation of roadways on the State Highway System (Interstate, U.S., and State routes). These funds may also be used for planning, enhancement, transit, bridge, or safety activities.

Surface Transportation Research Program funds are used to support research, technology development, and technology transfer.

Discretionary Federal Aid Funds The following funding programs may be available to this region:

Borders and Corridors funds are for planning, constructing, or operating projects in international border states and nationally recognized high-priority corridors.

Demonstration (ISTEA) of High Priority (TEA-21) funds are for U.S. Congress-designated projects. These funds cannot be used for any other purpose without congressional action.

Interstate Maintenance Discretionary funds are for resurfacing, restoring, rehabilitating and reconstructing (including adding lanes) on the Interstate highway system. Projects must be more than $10 million and on a high-volume urban route or a rural route with high truck volume.

Public Lands Highways funds are available for any kind of transportation project eligible for assistance under Title 23, United States Code, that is within, adjacent to, or provides access to public lands. These highways may be under federal, state, or local jurisdiction.

Scenic Byways funds are for highways that have been designated as a national or state scenic, historic, or back-country byway.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) The NHTSA highway safety grant funds are administered by the NMSHTD Office of Highway Safety and the New Mexico Traffic Safety Commission to fund statewide and local safety projects that address New Mexico's most critical traffic safety problems.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a listing of transportation projects within the State of New Mexico which are programmed for the next six years. The first three years are fiscally constrained as required by Federal regulations, while the subsequent three years are provided for planning purposes and are not required to the meet the stringent financial constraints of the first three years. NMSHTD requires MRCOG to submit a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is a listing of planning and programming activities to improve the transportation system in MRCOG's MPO planning area. The TIP helps to provide consistency with the NMSHTD's STIP process and establishes a broad base of understanding and awareness of the region's transportation needs. The (TIP) summarizes transportation planning and programming activities in the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA). The TIP contains the multimodal transportation projects that will best serve current and future development given the

resources available.

The TIP is developed under the direction of the Urban Transportation Planning Policy Board (UTPPB) of the Board of Directors of the MRCOG. As the metropolitan planning organization for the AMPA, the MRCOG is responsible for developing the TIP in cooperation with the NMSHTD and the local transit provider, the City of Albuquerque.

Local Government Funding The following funding programs are generally available to local governments:

Community Driving While Impaired Prevention Program funds may be used for the general costs of DWI education, public information, enforcement, adjudication and prevention.

Cooperative Agreement Program (COOP) Local Government Road Funds are used according to the guidelines within the Local Governments Road Fund law. The funds may be used for the construction, maintenance, repair, improvement and paving of public highways and streets and public school parking lots including materials, labor and use of equipment. Administrative costs are not allowed. Funds must be used in combination with local funds through cooperative agreements and/or joint powers agreements. Indian tribes/pueblos may enter into agreements for work on public streets and public school parking lots located on the reservation.

County Arterial (Road) Program Local Government Road Funds can be used for the actual costs of construction, reconstruction, improvement and maintenance of county roads.

Municipal Arterial Program (MAP) Local Government Road Funds may be used for construction or reconstruction activities, preliminary engineering, design, and right-of-way acquisition. Utility adjustments, street lighting, and drainage other than that needed to drain the roadway are the responsibility of the municipality.

Ride-Share & State Wide Van Pool Program grant funds are available for ride-share activities. These activities may include, but are not limited to commuter matching, data base development and maintenance, community outreach and education.

School Bus Routes Program Local Government Road Funds may be used for the actual costs of maintaining, repairing, paving, and improving school bus routes and public school parking lots.

Highway Safety 402 Program. Federal law stipulates that funds be used to implement state highway safety plans. Funds may be used to fulfill the objectives and limited indirect costs.

DWI Prevention 410 Program. Projects must have a direct and measurable impact on reducing alcohol-related vehicle crashes. This fund supplements the Community Driving While Impaired Prevention Program funded by the $75.00 fee charged to those convicted of DWI offenses. All the state funds are used for local DWI prevention programs.

Surface Transportation Program. For roads, funds may be used for preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, and improvement projects. Project categories are: a) funds for any area, b) funds for urbanized areas, c) funds for areas of less than 5,000 population, d) highway safety construction, e) hazard elimination, f) transportation enhancements including planning and historic preservation among other activities.

Traffic Safety Education and Enforcement Program. Funds may be used for education or enforcement programs that have a clear and measurable effect on the reduction of motor vehicle crashes, deaths and injuries. Funds are used for many activities such as providing school curricula and materials, developing community safety forums, training police to teach bicycle and pedestrian safety, and upgrading police crash investigation skills.

Transportation Enhancement Activities. Funds may be used for one or more of the following activities or for a part of one of these activities, such as environmental assessment: 1) Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles. 2) Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites. 3) Scenic or historic highway programs. 4) Landscaping or other scenic beautification. 5) Historic preservation. 6) Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures or facilities and canals. 7) Preservation of abandoned railway corridors, including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian and bicycle trails. 8) Control and removal of outdoor advertising. 9) Archaeological planning and research. 10) Mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff.

Alcohol-Impaired Driving Countermeasures Grants, Section 410. States may receive funds after implementing certain alcohol-impaired driving countermeasures. Local governments may be eligible for subgrants.

Entrepreneurial Services Challenge Program (ESP). Grants are provided to county, city, or other public body that then sponsors entrepreneurs, community civic organizations and business associations to develop and operate transit services.

Intermodel Transportation Planning Grants. States receive grants to develop an intermodel model. In New Mexico the program works with the Council of Governments.

General Obligation Bonds. This method of funding uses the taxing power of the jurisdiction to pay interest and principal to retire the debt. Many different kinds of bonds

can be sold to finance different kinds of improvements. Voter approval may be required.

Revenue Bonds. These bonds are sold for projects that produce revenues, and are financed through service charges or fees. The interest rates on these bonds are generally higher than those of general obligation bonds; however voter approval is rarely required.

Special Assessment District. Public works that benefit particular properties are often financed by special assessment (or those who directly benefit). Improvements financed by this method often include street paving.

Impact Fees. Communities may require developers to pay additional charges and fees to help cover the cost of public works such as water and sewer hookups, roads, street lights and traffic signals in new developments. These costs are then passed on by the developers to the consumer by increasing the price of land sales, development of residences, or in rents to business occupants. In New Mexico, impact fees are authorized under the Development Fees Act [5-8-1 to 5-8-42 NMSA 1978].

User Fees**.** These fees are often used to help finance bridges, tunnels, or roads. A user will be charged a toll (fee) when using a particular road. The fee will also be used to make improvements or for general maintenance of a road.

Railroad Planning and Projects. The purpose of this program is to aid railroad companies, businesses and communities in mitigating adverse impacts when rail services are curtailed or abandoned through funds for either planning rail services or by rehabilitative branch lines.

Private Sector Funding Although not as common as federal, state, or local funding sources, the private sector will on occasion provide funding for specific transportation projects if it is in their best interest. For example, Intel Corporation in Rio Rancho provided funding for the NM 528 expansion.